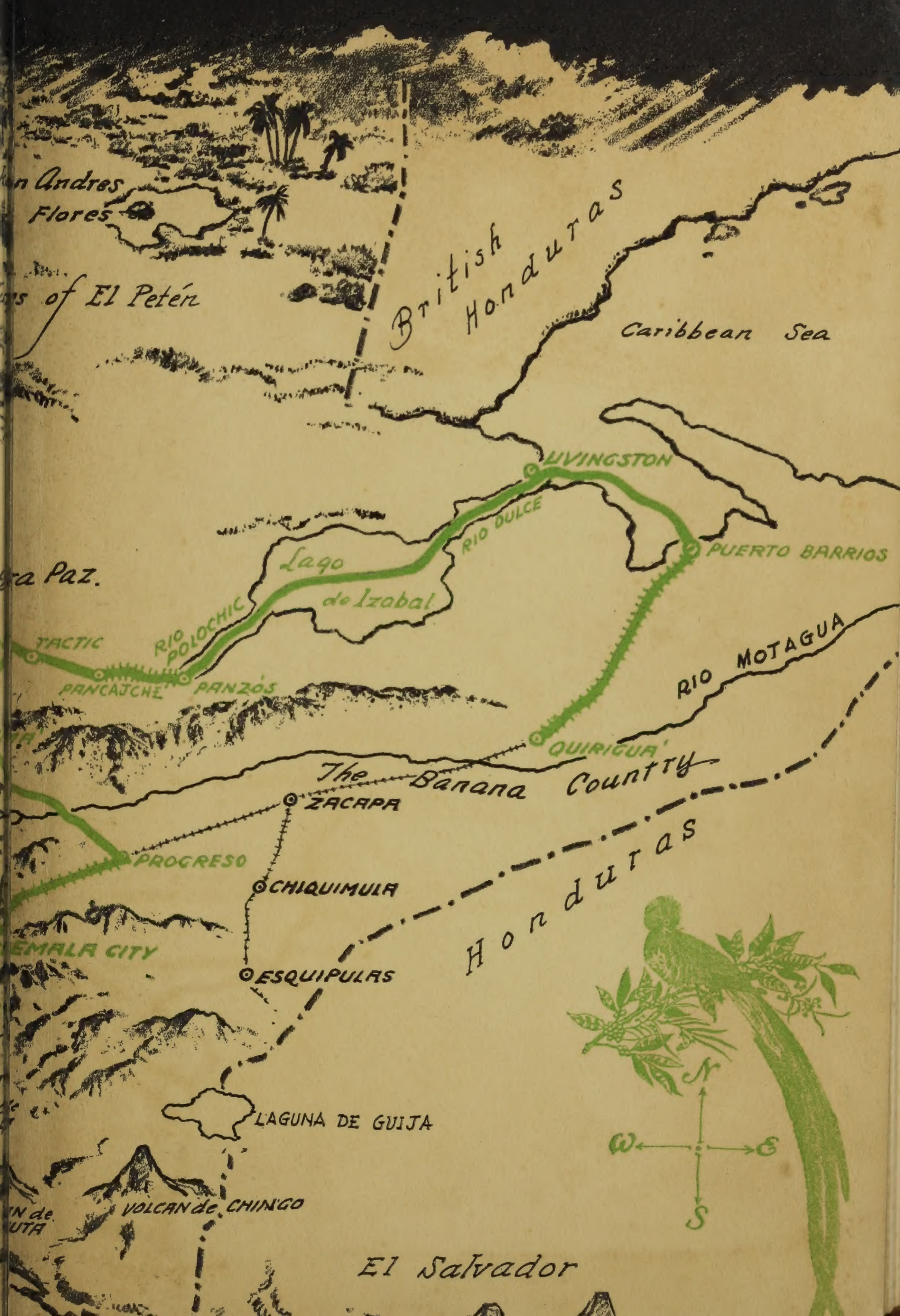
SKETCH MAP
of
GUATEMALA
Showing principal mountains, volcanoes, rivers, lakes, roads and railways. Route traveled by the author marked in green.
Mexico
Ruins of Zaculeu
HUEHUETENANGO
The Mayan Highlands
SAN MARCOS
HUITAN
MOMOSTENANGO
VOLCAN TACANA
VOLCAN TAJUMULCO
SAN MARCOS
STA. CRUZ QUICHE
SAN FRANCISCO EL ALTO
QUEZALTENANGO
SANTO TOMAS CHICHICASTENANGO
TOTONICAPAN
SOLOLA
CHIMALTENANGO
RETALHULEU
MAZATENANGO
ATITLAN
ANTIGUA
VOLCAN SAN PEDRO
VOLCAN SANTA CLARA
VOLCAN ZUNIL SANTA CLARA
VOLCAN, ATITLAN
VOLCAN FUEGO
PALIN
VOLCAN DE AGUA
LAGO
ESCUINTLA
CHAMPERICO
Tropical Coastal Plain
VOLCAN de TECUAMBURRO
VOLCAN SANTA MARIA
VOLCAN SANTO TOMAS
SAN JOSE'



San Andres
Flores
of El Petén
British Honduras
Caribbean Sea
Paz.
LIVINGSTON
RIO DULCE
PUERTO BARRIOS
Lago de Izabal
RIO POLOCHIC
TACTIC
PANCAJCHE
PANZÓS
RIO MOTAGUA
QUIRIGUA'
The Banana Country
ZACAPA
PROGRESO
CHIQUIMULA
Honduras
EMALA CITY
ESQUIPULAS
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S
LAGUNA DE GUIJA
VOLCAN de CHINGO
El Salvador

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NOTES ON A DRUM

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NOTES ON A DRUM

Travel Sketches

in

Guatemala

By JOSEPH HENRY JACKSON

NEW YORK · 1937

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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SET UP BY BROWN BROTHERS LINOTYPERS
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO

MARION

Who, next time, will be old enough
to come along

"And so the Way opens again itself, and sheweth *Guatemala,* welcoming the weary Travelers with a pleasant Prospect, what with green Walks and a sandy and gravelly Road unto the City, which never shut Gate against any Goer or Comer but freely and gladly entertains them."

A New Survey of the West-Indies

By Thomas Gage
1642

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As always, a journey into a new land means new debts of gratitude to the many who have helped smooth the way. It is not possible to list here all who gave us valuable advice, who saved us from making mistakes both strategic and diplomatic, who supplied us with information and counsel and letters to generous friends, who entertained us along the road. But I should like to express our thanks particularly to the following: to Laurence H. Tharp, Lesley B. Simpson and Dorothy Moore for checking and adjusting our mental compasses and chronometers before we started; to Armand Depichon and to the French Line which he so ably represents for getting us off to a flying start, and to the United Fruit Company for putting the proper happy ending to our trip; to Gustavo and Janet Stahl for excellent advice and warm hospitality; to Tocsika Townley Roach for the time she spent making two strangers feel at home; to Willis and Helen Howe for un-

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J. H. J.

Berkeley, California
July, 1937

NOTES ON A DRUM

I

WHEN we came out on deck to view the coast of Guatemala we knew nothing about drums. We had not associated drums with Guatemala at all. If you had asked us we should have said that drums suggested Darkest Africa, perhaps the voodooed forests of Cuba; it had never occurred to us that Central America had either drums or drummers. That we discovered afterward, up in the highland villages in fiesta-time when the air shook with the sound of drumming and the hills caught the echo and flung it back at us until it seemed that the drum-notes were everywhere, the pulse-beat of the country. It was up there, too, that our inn room contained no table but a tall Mayan drum set on end for my typewriter, wherefore these notes written on a drum.

But all this came later. Our first sight of Guatemala had nothing to do with drums.

NOTES ON A DRUM

We had come rolling down the Pacific, out of the cold northern waters into warmer soundings off Baja California, past Cap San Lucas with its forlorn little lighthouse looking rather like a smallish Civil War fort, and into the tropics at last. We had threshed our way across the tumbling mouth of the Gulf of Tehuantepec, watching the white-caps boldly for the first half-hour, watching the bilious green of our stateroom walls the rest of the day, not quite so boldly. And when we came up next morning for our first glimpse of Guatemala's coast we thought we knew what we were going to see. It would be just like the coast we had been looking at for three days; bare brown hills, occasionally jagged but softer near the water's edge, slipping down to an insignificant strip of beach and a mild surf that now and then swept up to a huddle of Indian huts. Why should it be anything else?

It was nothing like that. Something had happened during the night; all at once the high mountains had come down to the sea. We were closer to shore, certainly, but that was not all of it. The mountains themselves were not the same. The low brown ranges had suddenly grown to black, towering volcanic cones, frighteningly near to us. The air was different too; now we could feel the breath of the land, the steaming exhalation of the lush tropical growth that here pushed down to salt water. The cold geographical truth is that there are thirty miles or more of almost level land all along this coast before the rise begins into the hills behind. But under the frowning peaks that seem so close those miles diminish to one, to a ribbon of sand, to noth-

ing. One after another, endlessly, the volcanoes march along beside their ocean; Tacaná, up on the Mexican border, Tajumulco, Santa María, Santo Tomás, Santa Clara, Atitlán with Tolimán dodging over its shoulder, San Pedro near it and just visible, then the group of three much closer, Agua, Fuego and Acatenango, and the lesser needle of Pacaya on toward the south. It is an overpowering procession even though most of them do not threaten any more. On the flank of Santa María her son, Santiagito—Little Jimmy if you want to be irreverent about it—smokes constantly in an irritated sort of way, and there is always a white plume above Fuego. But these volcanoes do not need smoke and fire; they do very well without. Immense and ageless, they begin telling you about their country when you are twenty miles out at sea. Guatemala is an old land and the volcanoes know it, and they know how to make the visitor feel it too. For a fleeting moment we thought we might just stay aboard ship. After all, nobody could force us to get off. Maybe we had been mistaken in coming to these forbidding mountains, these outward and visible manifestations of earth's inward and spiritual turbulence. Plainly they were hostile, as they had been four hundred years ago to a red-haired Spaniard who came riding down from Mexico to conquer their land. Even under the brilliant tropic sun they were dark, ominous, angry. The scrubbed planking of the deck seemed so friendly now, so firm and familiar underfoot. We were even growing accustomed to the sea; perhaps we would come to love it just for itself. Would it be too cowardly to change our minds?

Nobody would know we had been afraid. Just a whim, they would say; how delightful to be able to do things on the spur of the moment!

It was at this point that the ship altered her course, swinging toward the shore, and the purser spoke behind us. "That," he said, "is San José de Guatemala. Would you like to look?" He handed us the binoculars and we looked, C. first. "Why," she said, "it's a regular little town!" I took my turn. So it was. A town—with buildings and a railroad station and a long wharf running out into the sea. There was even a road that wound back toward the hills, beginning to climb as it lost itself in the green trees massed on the slopes. "Those trees," I asked, "what would they be? Bananas?" "Bananas," said the purser. Bananas! Of course, we knew bananas. Panic left us and the volcanoes fell back into place. After all, they were just mountains. They were old, to be sure, far older than man. They had seen the world made. Only yesterday they had spouted ashes and flames; today they had almost made a visitor change his mind. But bananas grew at their feet. You can't very well feel awe at the sight of a banana. "Well," I said brightly, "here we are!" "Mhm," said C. There may or may not have been a sardonic gleam in her eye.

One of the things we had done by way of preparation was to go back over Aldous Huxley's "Beyond the Mexique Bay" and re-read his account of his arrival in Guatemala, the story of how dreadfully he was treated, how "the

mechanism of over-compensation comes into play and the official of a small country takes his revenge for political inferiority by personal offensiveness towards foreigners—especially the nationals of powerful states," and so on. It all sounded pretty fearsome, and although we had been through various sorts of customs ceremonies in our time we were thoroughly prepared for something extra unpleasant.

Naturally we were not with Mr Huxley on his trip and had no idea how he met the situation or what situation there was to meet. But for ourselves there was simply no difficulty of any kind. The ship had scarcely anchored a mile or so off San José's open roadstead when the Port Captain's launch bobbed alongside and discharged its load of uniformed inspectors. They were not the customs men; that inspection comes after you reach the pier. This was merely the formal preliminary lookover. It is a matter of routine, no more; but with Huxley in mind we were a trifle timid. What would happen to us? It was something like being sent to the Principal's Office; when the stout little Chief Inspector looked down at the papers on the saloon table before him, peered over his glasses at us and cleared his throat we were quite ready to hear "Er—Miss Butterworth tells me that for the third time this week you have been exchanging notes in class. Is this so?" But our reading had misled us. We were asked mildly for our passport. The four inspectors passed it solemnly round the table and we squirmed a bit as each compared the photographs with our own natural faces. The last one handed it back

politely and the Chief hemmed again and inquired whether we had ever been in Guatemala before. We said no, we hadn't. Afterward C. confessed that for one mad moment she had thought of saying *Y Usted?*—"And you?"—but remembered in time that you only made that reply when someone asked how you were. And that was all. A very minor fifth inspector who had taken up a strategic position near the door stamped our passport and countersigned it in a flourish of mauve ink and we were free to enter Guatemala. As we clambered gingerly down the companionway to the waiting launch we caught a glimpse of the officials, collars unbuttoned now their duty was done, enjoying a glass of beer with the Captain. They did not look at all as though they had been overcompensating. They even seemed pleased that two more nationals of a powerful state were coming to visit their country.

Chugging toward shore over the long smooth rollers we thought again of Mr Huxley and his unhappy experience and wondered what could have gone wrong. Maybe his officials were hot and tired; tropical ports are not exactly comfortable spots, and wearing a uniform does not automatically render a man insensitive to heat or immune to the fatigues of the civilian. Or maybe from long experience they had come to agree, in their less sophisticated way, with Mr Huxley himself on the question of the general contrariness and stupidity of the average human being. In any case, they were no more and no less than men holding jobs, like other men in other jobs anywhere. And from men who work for a living, in Guatemala as elsewhere, you

get much the kind of treatment your manner invites, as most travelers know.

Until that moment we had been too busy to think about how one got from the launch to the wharf, but the ship's doctor and the purser who were coming ashore with us to get some fresh limes for their rum punches, now reminded us of what we had heard.

At San José, a small port, ships do not tie up to the pier; the swell is too heavy and there is not enough commerce. Most of Guatemala's coffee and bananas go out by Puerto Barrios on the east coast, and the machinery from Germany and *machetes* from Hartford come in the same way. A breakwater on the Pacific side would cost more than it was worth. Passengers, therefore, go ashore by the launch, which covers the distance in no time, rounding smartly—or fairly smartly, anyway—alongside the pilings while you crane your neck trying to estimate how far it is up to the top and what it will be like getting there. We were staring up at the floor-boards when a donkey-engine rattled above and the landing-chair swung over the edge and slid down to us.

On big tourist days when the cruise ships come in with several hundred passengers they use a sort of bird-cage of iron painted a cheerful apple-green; that way it is possible to haul up seven or eight people at once. But when it's a matter of only a few the chair suffices—a square-built, solid affair of heavy wood suspended in a strong rope sling. They seated C. first, telling her to hold fast to the arms, and I had just time to remember with a shudder

that grim stolen photograph of the Ruth Snyder execution when she was snatched upward with a fine grinding of the winch, the purser standing on the back rung and enjoying the whole business hugely. Then the chair was down again and with the doctor balanced behind me I was Taken for the Ride. Looking down from above we realized that the distance was not great; twenty or thirty feet at the most. But we agreed that we knew exactly how a radish felt when it was plucked.

The customs inspection was routine also. We unlocked the bags in a hot little shed and a bored man in sweat-stained khaki poked through them while assorted ragamuffins of both sexes peered over his shoulder to see what the visitors' clothes looked like. Then his assistant slapped on the stickers and we were done. The whole business may have taken fifteen minutes, certainly not more. We were just about to nod at one of the fifteen porters who clamored for the job of taking our baggage down the quarter-mile pier to the station when a small brown boy pushed importantly through the group with the news that Señor Oontair sent his compliments and would be down to meet us. Right behind him came Mr Hunter himself, the bearer of good news. We knew that our ship had missed the train connection and had made up our minds to one night in San José's primitive hotel. Now, however, we wouldn't have to chance the insect night-life of a decidedly malarial port. Word had been sent down the mountain from the capital that a good and generous lady to whom we had a letter was driving down to get us, bag and

baggage. What was more, if she didn't arrive he, Mr Hunter, would put us up at his house; the hotel would never do. We looked over at it and saw what he meant. Still, as we walked behind our porter in the oppressive heat we inwardly blessed the kind stranger who had given up most of a day—three hours down to the port and three hours back up again to Guatemala City's 5,000-foot elevation—to make our arrival a pleasant one. And as we set foot on firm land again for the first time in a week there she was, sixtyish, capable looking, clearly a woman of determination. In less time than it takes to tell it she had showed the porter just how the bags must be loaded, told her driver to help him, explained to Mr Hunter about a blow-down she had seen ten miles up the road, and shaken hands with us. Some acknowledgment seemed to be indicated and I essayed it first. "This," I ventured, "is most kind." At my elbow C. chimed in. "Tremendously kind," she said. "A lovely welcome to Guatemala." Our new friend looked at us as though she had only just seen us. "Guatemala?" she snorted. "Hell! This isn't Guatemala. *I'll* show you Guatemala! Get in! What are you waiting for?" A trifle dazed, we got in. I, at least, had intended to thank Señor Oontair for his courtesies but there was no time. Our driver knew his mistress's temperament. Before we could turn our heads San José's ten buildings and fourteen shacks were well behind us. There was a rustle in the front seat and we saw that from somewhere our hostess had produced a paper bag. "Nobody likes San José," she said simply. "Have a cookie? I find there's nothing like

'em on these trips." We turned a corner on two wheels, honked at a hen, and with mouths full of Ice Box Brownies entered the unknown, distant foreign land we had come to visit.

The eighty-mile drive from San José to Guatemala City gives you an immediate and comprehensive cross-section of the country's climate.

San José itself is small, swampy, flat, blanketed by heavy heat like any other tropical port. So is the country just behind it. As we wound across the flat lands the symmetrical cones of Agua and Fuego—the volcanoes of Water and Fire—stood up straight ahead of us, guards at the pass through which we must approach the city. Soon we would begin the rise toward them; we could see the road in the distance creeping upward. In the meantime our way led straight on through the low country. Occasionally we passed a thatched hut; once in a while a little group of them, shoulder to shoulder, sprang up beside the road and faded into the jungle as we passed. The word "jungle," of course, has its shades of meaning. This is not the impenetrable, fantastic jungle of the Petén, up to the northeast, but the country is well wooded and wet enough to deserve the term. Sometimes an ox-cart pulled over to let us pass, and there were often small herds of cattle that held us up while their Indian drivers yelled and pushed to get them out of the way. Our man was patient. The car had a bugle horn, four mellow, persuasive notes, and he liked to play it—*sol, do, mi la!*, the *la* just a shade flat.

It always brought a flash of gleaming teeth from the Indian herdsmen, even in the midst of their sweat and worry with the cattle. A Mexican would have shouted with laughter at the sour note, would probably have invented some special derisive gesture just for the occasion; but these Indians know less about music and to all appearances care less. They have their marimbas, most of whose notes are a trifle off key anyway, and they are used to those. Any even reasonably harmonious combination pleases them. Their racial memories (if there is such a thing as a racial memory) can bring them only the harsh shrilling of the *chirimilla,* the Mayan ceremonial flute. After that, a mere shading, flat or sharp, can mean nothing at all.

There had been a brief rain since our friend had driven down to get us, and what had been dry and dusty highway was now pleasantly damp. We did not appreciate the blessing then, but we learned. Guatemala boasts something like three thousand miles of new highway now, but the term is elastic; "highway" must be stretched to infinity, almost, to be applicable to these roads. Yet it was no more than half a dozen years ago that the country had none to speak of. Now the government is pushing its road program hard and doing surprisingly well with it, even though such matters as paving are for the most part dreams, something to be realized tomorrow or the day after—or even the day after that.

The unseasonable shower (there are not supposed to be any rains between October and May, and this was November) had made all the difference, however. There was

no dust, only the coolness of newly moistened air and the fresh smell of growing things and wet earth. We swooped through miniature lakes with a fine dash of spray on the windshield, and gained altitude imperceptibly but steadily. On both sides of the road the blue morning-glory alternated with the scarlet flame of the poinsettia, and the two were underscored every hundred yards or so by the screaming yellow of a tropical vine whose name we never learned. It was as though the stage had been especially set for us, brushed and washed, the scenery painted anew by an artist who dealt only in the primary colors. Near the village of Escuintla which marks the end of the lowlands and the beginning of the climb into the hills, we passed the "blow-down" our hostess had been talking about, down at the port; a hundred or so acres of bananas flattened and torn by the wind that had come with the sudden rain. We murmured something about its being rough on the growers. "Oh, yes," said our friend. "No doubt. But if they didn't have a blow-down once in a while bananas wouldn't be worth a nickel a stem!" Unquestionably that is one way of looking at it.

The bananas gave way to sugar-cane as the road continued to rise, and the air grew cooler.

At Palín we paused for a moment under the enormous *ceiba* that shades a whole market-place. It was late afternoon and only a few Indian women were about, but their costumes were bright and strange, a promise of what we were to see later, up in the highland villages. It was in Palín that the women used to wear, with the long blue

skirt, a brief white *huipil* or blouse that left a span of brown, bare stomach. It was the special fashion, the style, the custom of Palín, by which its women were known. Now the new order of things forbids it. The command came down from the capital: No more exposed stomachs; the sensitive tourist might be scandalized. So the women of Palín have learned to weave an extra four or five inches of fabric at the bottom of each blouse and to tuck the added margin inside the skirt. So the proprieties are preserved, and the sixteen-millimeter enthusiast has that much less to snigger about at home when he lets down the pillow-slip screen, turns out the lights in the parlor and lectures his friends on the wonders of the Central American scene.

Here for the first time, because this is the first sizable town coming up from the port, the visitor notices the smallness of the Indians in this country, that and their swimming gait, half walk, half run. Few can be much over five feet; perhaps, as Napoleon is said to have shaved an inch off the height of the French in his wars, the job of fighting Alvarado cut down the Maya-Quiché people to their present squat dimensions. Not that these Indians were ever very large; the archaeologists have established that. But today they are tiny. As for the women's gait, it comes from the traditional style of carrying burdens on the head. A fine and upright carriage, of course, is one of the results of that habit; but so is the rapid, gliding walk in which the muscles at the back of the thigh do most of the work, fulfilling much the same function as the spring of a railway coach and keeping the upper part of the body steady. Give the

Indian woman skirts long enough to sweep the ground and hide her feet and she would seem to run on wheels. Even the little girls have the same glide; they bounce and skip in play, but the moment they have as much as a pint-size basket to carry up it goes on top of the head and the body settles into the run-walk that is their heritage.

Immediately beyond Palín the road sets seriously about its business of climbing. You can fork to the left here and go round by way of Antigua, the old capital of the glorious Colonial period in the Valley of Panchoy; the tourist-caravans coming up on steamer days do that. But we were bound for Guatemala City, the capital of today; we would be spending a week or so in Antigua later. So we kept straight on. To the north and west, Agua towered above us, the dead crater more than 12,000 feet above sea-level, not high enough for snow in the tropics but sufficiently impressive just the same. Our road rose steadily and the nature of the growth beside it changed as we curved upward. Now it was oaks, with clumps of small orchids clinging in every crotch of the crooked branches, and the fields of sugar-cane were replaced by patches of corn, little *milpas* tucked away into every possible corner and angle of the hills, their furrows following the rise and fall of the ground like lines on some gigantic contour-map. By the time the tip of Lake Amatitlán came into sight, away off among the mountains to the right, we were something like 4,000 feet up, and it was so much colder that we wrestled ourselves into the overcoats we had thought we would never use again. A locomotive wailed down near the lake,

a stray bound on some irregular business since there is only one scheduled train a day each way between Guatemala City and the port, and it had passed this way long since. Perhaps this one was hauling cement; Lake Amatitlán was enjoying a building boom because President Ubico had made up the country's mind that the lake was to become a swank week-end resort and he was fostering development in every possible way. Villas in the modern style, all chromium posts and glass and stucco, were springing up at the water's edge and where our road skirted a small beach Indian workmen were laying out a good-sized park. I think it was here that something that had been at the back of our minds for the last hour struck us full force. Guatemala was in many ways like Mexico—at least, so far. Why, indeed, wouldn't it be, since it's next door? Yet it was different. And one of the differences, now that we had it pinned down, was that here there were no burros. We had been driving for two hours and more; we had passed all kinds of Indian traffic, ox-carts, an occasional horse, men and women carrying burdens. But no burros. Why? We asked our hostess, who said she didn't know why. "But," we said, "Mexico is full of them. Why should they simply stop at the border?" Our friend thought a moment, then appeared to make up her mind. "Listen," she said, "I can't tell you about the burros. They don't have them here and that's all I know. But I'll tell you something else. Don't talk about Mexico. I know you can't help thinking about it because you've just been there, and this country is somewhat like it. But nobody wants to hear about it in Guate-

mala. You'll only get in wrong if you go round comparing what you see here with what you saw there. This country is very touchy on the subject—for a lot of reasons." We were a bit startled; plainly our adviser meant more than she said. Naturally one doesn't make a habit of odious comparisons in a foreign land. But there was something more to this. "What do you mean, 'touchy'," we asked; "touchy in what way?" But our hostess had no more to say. "You'll see," she said, and would not return to the subject. We did see, too, before we had been in Guatemala a week. In the meantime we took her advice and were glad of it.

We looped round the end of Lake Amatitlán (an unfortunate mud-brown color it was, then and afterward, whenever we saw it) and for several miles our driver was very occupied with sharp grades and swinging curves as we came up to the high shelf on which Guatemala City rests. The road surface was much better here; after all, if you're going to promote a real estate development you have to make it fairly easy to get there. Here, too, we had our first inkling of the care with which this country is policed. Thirty-five minutes before you arrive at the outskirts of Guatemala City a traffic officer stationed on the highway takes your license number and telephones ahead. You must not take less than the specified time to get there; if you do it is evidence that you have exceeded the speed limit and you are fined. And when they fine you for speeding in Guatemala they mean it. A tag for that offense will cost you twenty-five dollars.

It was six in the evening as we reached the city and the

lights were winking on. Our man had slowed down; there was nothing else he could do. Indian women with baskets on their heads, children carrying their share, men with backs bent under unwieldy bundles, whole families trotting silently in single file filled the road. It was their road; the automobile is still an interloper in Guatemala. Moreover, the government is determined that it shall be kept in its place. At every important crossing and some quite insignificant ones there is a small brown policeman perched on his box in the middle of the street. You do not wait for him to change the traffic stream at regular intervals as in the United States; there are still not enough cars for that. Instead, the driver of every vehicle signals as he approaches a crossing—right turn, left turn or straight ahead, calling the officer's attention with an apologetic, mild toot if necessary. With the permission of the policeman, indicated by a cheep on his whistle and a return signal, he proceeds. He does not proceed until and unless he gets it. Perhaps it sounds like a slow business. It is. But pedestrians very seldom get killed in Guatemala.

The lights of the Palace Hotel looked very warm and pleasant as we drove up and clambered stiffly out into the chill air, and our room was comfortable enough, even though it harbored a rich aroma of mildew left over from the summer rains. They told us that the water in the carafe on the table was *hervida y filtrada,* both boiled and filtered, and that anyway it was perfectly good water in the first place. There seemed to be something faintly illogical about that, but we thanked them. Of course it was, we

said. We should never think of doubting it. But on the other hand it was our peculiar custom to drink only bottled mineral water or beer. Before the bellboy was out of the room on his way to fill the order, C. was testing the shower. It ran boiling hot. Our welcome was perfect. We didn't know then that we were witnessing a major miracle; never again in Guatemala did we get out of any faucet whatever more than a cupful of warm water at a time.

II

WHEN you come to Guatemala, unless you plan to stay long enough to learn the country for yourself by trial and error, the thing to do is to put yourself in the hands of Clark's Tours, an organization that specializes in showing the visitor what's what.

The Tours' particular job, of course, is rushing large groups of sightseers from place to place, injecting them meantime with the possible maximum of reasonably authentic history and atmosphere. Most visitors want just that service and the Clark office knows how to give it. But if you are wise you will not consider the Clarks mere trip-mongers. They are a good deal more than that. They will arrange the rapid-transit, scenic-railway, kind of tour for you if you want it. But if you have some time to spend and have your own ideas about the kind of thing you want to see and why, then you will find out what they can do when they're really pushed.

We had read most of the contemporary books available on Guatemala, from Huxley all the way back to the Stephens-Catherwood classic of a hundred years ago, and we had formed some small notion of what we were after and where to go to get it. We had dug up old Thomas Gage's "New Survey of the West Indies" printed by one A. Clark in London in the middle seventeenth century, and followed that pious old rascal's "Journey of Three Thousand and Three Hundred Miles Within the Mainland of America" from Mexico on down through Guatemala and beyond. With the help of friends whose Spanish was better than ours, we had skimmed through José Milla, and had read in translation some of the letters in which Don Pedro de Alvarado explained to his chief, back in Mexico, how difficult it was to "punish these heathen as they deserve," at the same time making it plain that in spite of the difficulties he, Alvarado, was doing a pretty good job of it. We had even dipped into a German book or two about the customs and habits and language of the Quiché Indians, all examined at length in the most solid pre-war German spirit of research.

So, as I say, we had Ideas. There was Antigua, for instance; there we would get (we hoped) something of the feeling of the spacious Colonial days, of the glory that was seventeenth-century Spain. There were the villages of the highland country, too, almost entirely Indian even today, where each district had its own costume, woven according to the old tradition by its women on their primitive two-stick looms. There we would see what the Conquest

had left of the men who had once lived in these angry mountains that had spouted fire and lava so long ago. Guatemala means coffee-planting, too, and we did not want to miss the Alta Vera Paz country, lower than the highlands and off to the northeast, where some of the best coffee on earth is grown. There was the indescribably beautiful Rio Dulce we had heard so much about; surely we could get that in, especially since it would lead us down to the steaming coastal plains over on the Gulf side, where the United Fruit Company permits nature to manufacture bananas to the ultimate enrichment of its Boston stockholders. And naturally we must include the ruins at Quiriguá where the ancient stones remain, half buried in the jungle, to piece out the Mayan story that the scholars have reconstructed at Copán in Honduras and at Chichen Itzá up in Yucatan. All these things and more were on our list when we dumped the whole business into the Clark Tours' lap. "Here," we said innocently, "this is what we would like to do and see. Won't you please arrange it?"

It wasn't until much later, after we had had a chance to see what some of the difficulties were, that we understood what an involved problem we had set them. Yet within the day they had done the trick. Their manager had produced the Plan Jackson, neatly so labeled on one original draft and two carbon copies. And it was a miracle of mosaic. It got everything in. It even embodied a few suggestions we hadn't thought of. It allowed for alternative trips, it matched our time-schedule, it left convenient two- and

three-day periods of leeway every so often in case we wanted to add or subtract from it (both of which we had occasion to do later), and it fitted our pocketbook. Yes, of course the Clarks are in the tour business. They should be presumed to know it. But they are to be complimented nevertheless on their very special talent for understanding the individual traveler and giving him what he needs and wants even when he doesn't know exactly what it is.

Best of all, The Plan as duly approved and checked gave us three days in Guatemala City before beginning our Giant Swing up across the ten-thousand-foot passes and down through the river valleys of the Maya-Quiché country that Alvarado took for his Captain and his King. That way we would have a chance to see what the capital city itself was like. Since most of the day had been spent in registering with the police (a routine matter but not to be neglected) and in distributing some of the letters of introduction we had gathered before leaving home, we decided to celebrate the success of The Plan by going to a motion-picture. We found one without any trouble, at the Teatro Lux, very modern in the best Radio City style. It was an all-Spanish feature called *Cielito Lindo,* admitted to be an importation from Mexico but not, as the program hastened to explain in tasteful green ink, "a cruel narration of the armed revolution which transformed the social aspect of Mexico." In fact, the announcement continued, this was "not in any way a truculent production." It was rather a drama concerning that which neither terrible battles nor the most horrid evils could destroy—*EL*

AMOR! Somehow a movie about *El Amor,* particularly in capital letters, was reassuring; it had a nice familiar sound. And when the first words flashed on the screen we felt even better about it. This, in characters of fire with realistic lightnings jiggling round them, was a *SUPER-SUPER-PRODUCCIÓN!!* We settled into our seats, completely at home. One touch of a super-compounded superlative made all the Americas kin.

Guatemala City is clean, quiet, orderly, well-policed, modern and almost entirely without what has come to be called in the special sense "atmosphere."

Its hundred and fifty thousand citizens are proud of their town and of course they have a right to be; from Mexico City until you get all the way down into South America, there is no other city as large and anywhere near as up-to-date. To be sure, there are no street-cars; the city doesn't need any, since you can walk from one end of it to the other without exhaustion, and there are sufficient buses and taxis to take you anywhere you need to go in a hurry. There is no gas, either, though there is plenty of electric power, and the streets are narrow as in all Central American cities. But in all other ways Guatemala's capital is astonishingly like almost any town its size in the United States, neon signs, modernistic store-fronts and all. Indeed, from the visitor's viewpoint that is its only fault. After the first day or two, when the newness wears off, you might almost as well be at home.

The quick cruise-tripper hardly ever discovers this, natu-

rally. From the time he is chivvied into the lobby of the hotel, where one of Guatemala's best marimba bands is dispensing its humming rhythms, to the moment when he is hustled into the train to go down to the port again, he has been unobtrusively taken in charge. He is shuttled from the Market to the Museum, from the Department of Agriculture where he is given a free cup of coffee to the *Ron Amajá* shop where he is presented with a free cocktail cunningly compounded with sugar and orange juice, disguising the rum so effectively that he immediately wants two more, which he shouldn't have. The guides politely chaperon their charges to the best shops, smoothly run them round the finest residential districts, lecture them on the giant relief map built of concrete and explain the Cathedral, the Museum and the names of the strange dishes on the menu. Then, before anyone has seen the same thing twice, it is time to pile into the tour-cars and be off. No one has had a chance to learn that the Marimba Band immediately puts away its little sticks until next tourist-day; that the hotel lobby is rapidly and expertly divested of its gala trimmings and reduced to its customary aspect of a Drummers' Rest; that the clerk who mixes the cocktail to advertise the virtues of his employers' Amajá Rum sits back to rest and to wait for the next feverish trainload of sightseers complete with cameras. It's the regulation system, and it's excellently worked out, too. But it does leave the tourist with an inaccurate impression. He is likely to think Guatemala City a much more exotic place than it really is. He is also likely to take the capital as representing

the whole country, which it distinctly does not. Guatemala is like the old Scots ballad-maker; her heart's in the highlands, her heart is not here. The capital city is not even a good reflection of the days of Colonial Spain. After all, the people only moved into this valley when our forefathers were thinking about declaring their independence from His Majesty George the Third of England. All that represents the old Spanish magnificence is to be found down in the splendid ruins of Antigua.

Nevertheless there are things to see in Guatemala City, and the visitor should see them. There is, for instance, the Church of the *Cerro del Carmen,* up on its little hill overlooking the city.

In 1620 Antigua was a flourishing capital, colorful and busy with the comings and goings of the Captains-General. Across the mountains, here where Guatemala City now stands, was what was then known as the *Valle de las Vacas* —Cattle Valley—where a few settlers had large ranches and supplied the Most Noble and Loyal Gentlemen of the City of St. James with the finest cuts of beef. In that year there came to Antigua from Spain a certain Carmelite, Fray Juan Croz, bringing with him an image of the Virgin of Mount Carmel, delicately wrought of pure silver and gold and dedicated by St. Therese to Guatemala.

Fray Juan did not stay in Antigua, no one seems to know exactly why. Perhaps he found it too populous, too sinful a city. Evidently he was of a solitary turn of mind, for he took his image with him and left for the hills, coming to rest finally in the peaceful valley where the *rancheros*

herded their cattle and lived the simple life. For a time, the legend has it, he lived in a cave, but the inhabitants were of the opinion that so good a man and so fine an image deserved to be better housed, and they built him a church on the hill. By that time the place was known as Hermit Valley. During the next hundred years the little church was added to, improved, enlarged and at length rebuilt in the massive style necessary for withstanding earthquakes in this tremulous new land. Then came the great disaster of 1773, when the people of Antigua saw their walls fall down and their greatest churches, fashioned for the glory of God and Spain, crack and shudder and tumble. They knew they had to go somewhere and their men, sent to spy out the land, chose the Valley of the Hermit as the spot where they would raise the new city. Fray Juan Croz was dead and gone, but his church stood and still stands, a monument to a man who preferred the quiet life.

For these reasons this Church of Carmen Hill is, as far as we could find out, the oldest building in Guatemala City. When we reached the windy eminence on which it stands, solid and lonely as an Egyptian tomb, an eight-year-old boy and a soldier were the only creatures to be seen. The boy, in well-washed blue jeans, put down his shiny mouth-organ long enough to inform us that there was nobody to show us the interior of the church; the *padre* had gone down into the city on business. The soldier admitted that he could think of no reason why we should not climb up on the low wall around the court in order to take a picture or two. He moved on after giving the permission; he was

there to walk his post in a military manner, and no two wandering *Norteamericanos* were going to make him forget his duty. But our little boy stayed put, blowing tentative chords on his harmonica; the tinny notes came intermittently to us up-wind as we clambered and balanced, focusing from our edgy foothold on the crumbling parapet. Our picture of the Church of the Virgin of the Cerro del Carmen includes him, doggedly maintaining his position, a tiny firm figure against the vast wooden expanse of the heavy closed door.

Halfway down the hill C. suddenly remembered the gold and silver Virgin, consecrated by the blessed Santa Theresa and brought at such pains to the King's new land across the enormous ocean. What had become of her? Who could tell us? I suggested half-heartedly that I might go back and ask the boy, but C. said no. He was pure artist, wringing harmony from a ten-cent gadget on his lonely hilltop in the rushing east wind. What would he know of Virgins who only music knew? Especially, she added a moment later, at eight years of age.

There are several markets in Guatemala City but we wanted to see the big one—*El Mercado Central.*

You may or may not be familiar with Latin American markets. If you are, you know that most of them share one notable characteristic; if you want to spend any time in them you must hold your nose. This Central Market, however, was not like that at all, but astonishingly neat and sweet-smelling. We asked about it, and were told that its

present cleanliness is a fairly recent manifestation. Once upon a time—and not so many years ago, either—it was a proper market, old style, reeking of ancient vegetables, littered with scraps of last week's meat and last month's orange-peelings, slippery underfoot with all the odds and ends and remainders that collect where thousands of people meet daily to transact the business of buying and selling food. But the government—and the government is President Ubico—said the smells must go. Today this big market in the midst of a city is as free from bad odors as the open-air ones in the country towns. There is no refuse about; the aisles are kept clean and the only smells are the rich and spicy vapors rising from the kettles in the cooked-foods section, so appetizing that you want to taste something from every pot. If you are wise, though, you won't. The North American stomach is distinctly not adapted to the lively and ingeniously varied bacteria which the Indian constitution has long ago learned to take in stride.

Since the market is primarily for the resident who wants to buy necessities there are only a few tourist stalls. One or two have blankets from Momostenango up in the hills; there are several in which you may buy the beautifully woven native textiles, though most of the stock is second-rate, whipped together for the foreigner who doesn't know the difference and doesn't care. Perhaps half a dozen booths are filled with just thingummies, carved wooden ash trays and painted pottery vases and such matters, useless and breakable bric-a-brac that the visitor always seems to love to buy and take home. But mostly there are acres of fruits

and vegetables, square miles of meats, row upon row of clothing counters and two whole aisles given up to flowers. Everywhere are Indians, a few men but chiefly women, their baskets balanced on their heads, their bare feet slip-slipping along the stone flooring with a curious small hissing sound. The crowd, of course, is about double the number of shoppers, since no one of any standing would think of carrying a bundle. With each is her Indian maid-servant, basket ready to take the purchases, following humbly at heel. Outside were cars waiting for the favored few, but most middle-class housewives walk to market and back again. Some, though, come in elderly surreys drawn by the small horses in which Guatemala seems to specialize. For twenty years neither of us had so much as thought of that Victorian vehicle, but now we know what happens to good surreys when they die; they come down to Central America.

We wandered up one aisle and down the next, struck by the neatness of everything and by the absence of noise. The stall-keepers do not shout at you here as they do in Mexico. Now and then some toothless crone with a cigarette hanging from her lower lip would hold out a potato or a bunch of carnations toward us, but that was all. Once, in the flower section, a buxom *ladino* girl said *"Señor!"* with the odd whispering "r" of Guatemala that makes the word sound almost like *"Señorrrsh!"* and proffered a bunch of violets with a gesture of the eye toward C. But before I had time to think of whether or not I might buy them C. had got the idea and shaken her head. She was right, of course.

If there was one thing we did not need at the moment it was flowers. We had flowers—about twenty dozen flowers of all kinds, sorts and conditions. Everybody on whom we had left cards or to whom we had sent our letters of introduction had replied with flowers—baskets of them, bouquets tastefully arranged in inverted straw sombreros, enormous assortments of orchids, roses, carnations, lilies, forget-me-nots. It is a custom of the country and one, by the way, that you would do well not to forget if you stay any length of time in Guatemala. If you are invited to dinner, send flowers. As an acknowledgment of a good time at a cocktail party, send flowers. Send flowers for sympathy, for good will, as a way of conveying thanks, or just for fun. But send them. Everybody does. Our room at the hotel was full of them. No, it was plain that we did not need flowers; not just at the moment. I conveyed that sentiment to the vendeuse who had whispered *"Señorrsh!"* at me, but she shook her head impatiently. These, after all, were especially beautiful flowers. She regarded them fondly at arm's length. *"Ah, las preciosas!"* she said, and meant it. I was nodding my head helplessly and muttering *"Cómo no!"* which is the nearest Spanish equivalent for "Sure! Of course!" when C. saved the day. Without doubt, she agreed, they were very beautiful violets, perhaps the most beautiful in the entire market. But then, one could not *eat* violets, could one? Assuredly not! We were gone before the bewildered woman could make up her mind whether or not the *gringa loca* really did perhaps eat violets in her own incomprehensible country.

Sixth Avenue bisects Guatemala City, north and south, and when we debouched into the cobbled street beside the market we could see the shops of that modern thoroughfare a block or two up the hill. Since we were going into the highlands very soon now, we wanted to have a look at the great concrete relief map of Guatemala which is one of the City's notable sights. It is out at the very northern end of Sixth Avenue, easy of access by taxi or bus, and we decided there and then to visit it. After all, there is nothing quite like a relief map to give you the proper idea of what you are going to see, particularly in a country as mountainous as Guatemala.

You find the map out beside the Temple of Minerva, a curious structure in a sort of pseudo-Greek style, erected years ago by Estrada Cabrera who ordered one built in every city of consequence in Guatemala, just by way of lending an air of culture to his administration. We were not able to discover, then or later, that Cabrera did much else to encourage cultural pursuits, but at least he did provide the outward signs of the Greek Way in these pillared and porticoed monstrosities. Nowadays most of them have been torn down or fallen down of themselves, though this one is still in some use as a reviewing stand and judges' box when the school children of the City perform their competitive calisthenics in the flat fields surrounding it.

The Relief Map is a fascinating piece of work. It covers better than a quarter of an acre of ground, and was constructed in 1905 by an extremely ingenious engineer named Francisco Vela, who went to infinite pains to make it accu-

rate. Water runs down the tiny rivers and spreads out into lakes and bays and oceans in the right places. The tops of the volcanoes are painted a nice bright red, contrasting vividly with the green tint of the land around them, and the roads are yellowy-white ribbons winding up and around the mountains. The railroad is neatly marked with little strips of glittering metal, and all over the country are painted signs with the names of towns on them. Indeed, the map has only one fault, which is that the horizontal and vertical scales are not the same, the reason being that if the relationship between the high volcanoes and the rest of the country were exactly preserved the map would cover about eight times its present area and it would be impossible to see it all at once. As it is, you must climb to get a really good view; there is a wooden observation platform about twenty feet high at each end.

We mounted the east tower and later the western one, from which we observed that a strange looking mountain which had rather disturbed us because it was so different from the others was only the caretaker's *sombrero*. He was busy fixing up the changes in the Guatemala-Honduras border with a bucket of yellow paint and had apparently forgotten all about his hat, away up there in the hills near Chichicastenango. On the tower we fell into conversation with an Indian workman who was simply standing there looking, spellbound by his country's vast cement expanse. He explained things to us, pointing out the pass through which Alvarado came marching up from the coast, the valley in which he first met the frightened Indians drawn

up in battle array. "They were brave men," he said, a trifle sadly we thought, "but they did not know how to fight the Spaniards." We had found that out ourselves from what we had read. If just one chief of the Quichés had known, like the redoubtable Abdul, how to harrass the foe from the rear; if only a single minor *cacique* had conceived the idea of an ambush, there might not have been any Conquest as far as Guatemala was concerned. Alvarado marched his men through narrow defiles in the towering cliffs from which the merest handful of Indians might have picked them off, one by one. But no. The traditional way to fight was to fight. And poor deluded Tecum-Umán lined up his thirty thousand brave men out beyond the pass, on the wide plain where Don Pedro had a chance to bring his cavalry into action. The battle was lost then and there. All day the fighting went on, horses and swords of steel and cannon of brass against arrows and padded cloth armor and the magic of drums and feathered headdresses. At the end of it the little rivers ran red with blood and the Spaniard had cut his foothold in Guatemala. The slaughter was sanctified with a mass and the Mexican allies from Tlaxcala changed the outlandish name of Xelahú to Quezaltenango —the Place of the Quetzal—because it was in that region that they had first seen the proud and magnificently feathered green bird that is still the national emblem of the country.

We looked down on the innocent, fresh green of the valley and wondered what the Indian caretaker thought when he daubed on the new paint, or whether he thought about it

at all. Or our acquaintance? Had the clang of the battle, the bellow of the priests' conch-shell horns, the thunder of the drums, the roar of Spanish musketry rung through his head as it had through ours in the moments since his comment had conjured up the scene? Probably not. At any rate, he was now distinctly in the present century, aiming a brown finger at the map again to show us how it was possible—in the dry season, anyway—to drive all the way from the border of El Salvador up through Guatemala to the border of Mexico. "One day," he said, "Mexico may complete her portion of the Pan-American Highway. Then the North American may see both countries in one journey." We knew something about the problem of getting that road down through the jungles and mountains of Chiapas, the Mexican state that borders on Guatemala, and we tried to tell him that it wouldn't be soon. But he did not hear us. His own splendid conception had taken possession of him. "Both countries," he repeated, "in one voyage of the car!" We left him resting ragged elbows on the railing, gazing entranced at the tiny yellow road-lines that his imagination had so unexpectedly filled with whizzing North American automobiles.

III

YOU can see practicaly all the rest of Guatemala City's sights in one day, and we did.

There is, for example, the Colonial Museum, all the way down at the end of Sixth Avenue South.

It sits uncomfortably on top of a small hill from which you can view the City spread out below you. The Calvary Church used to occupy the site and unquestionably became it better, but it was in bad repair and the government worked out an involved deal by which it would take the building and the land for its projected Museum and build the church another edifice elsewhere. The church did quite well. It now has a good building and a plot of land which should some day be worth enough so that the parishioners can work out another, even more advantageous transaction in real estate if they are so minded. But the Museum, in spite of all the enthusiasm and good will that went into the scheme, has not come out so fortunately. Who it was that

had charge of reconstructing the old church we never found out; everyone we asked about it was too kind to name names. But it is pretty bad. On the Latin-American principle that a fine new front will excuse anything, the government's first move was to lift the building's face. This was accomplished by a palpably false façade which extends one story above the rest of the walls, an affair of arches pierced for non-existent bells, sweeping buttresses that support nothing at all, imposing windows from which no one may look out because there is nothing behind them, the whole culminating in a grand circular fanlight that illuminates only the empty air. Nor is this glorious bit of window-dressing the stone it seems a block away. When you get closer you perceive that the fine squares of marble are after all only plaster marked out in straight lines to indicate edges and artificially veined with zigzags in black and red paint. The old church building had dignity; you can see enough of it from the sides and the back to be sure of that. Restored in its original design it would have been as graceful a shelter as could very well have been devised to hold the relics entrusted to it. There must have been architects who understood that and were willing to say so. But apparently they were given no voice in the matter. Now the City has this horrid affair, the kind of thing that the mad Ludwig of Bavaria might have put up if he hadn't had quite enough money to spend. We found no one who liked it; everyone with whom we discussed it was apologetic about the sad sham, a trifle embarrassed. Why it was done remains one of the mysteries.

Nor does the interior amount to much more. To be sure, it does take time to get together a really good collection of any sort. Eventually, perhaps, the more public-spirited citizens of Guatemala will leave their cherished private collections of Colonial treasures to their country, and the Museum will improve. But so far the displays include only one or two really significant things. There is the sword alleged to have belonged to the conqueror, Don Pedro de Alvarado. There are numerous busts, portraits and photographs of Justo Rufino Barrios, Guatemala's great Liberator; in fact, there is even his walking-stick, a bit lonesome looking in its glass case on the wall. There are a great many ecclesiastical paintings, no better and no worse than the general run of their kind, many of them brought painfully across the mountains from the ruined churches of Antigua after the earthquake of 1773, most of them large and gloomy canvases representing in detail selected episodes from the lives of assorted saints. One of the historically interesting exhibits is Guatemala's Declaration of Independence, discovered only three years ago in the archives where it had been mislaid for decades, and now enshrined, as it should be, in a place of honor in a special case. The amusing thing about this document, we were told, is that historians have been solemnly referring to it as reposing in the British Museum. One scholarly pedagogue even went so far as to write modestly that he had seen it there.

Of all the displays, though, the one that seemed to us really worth seeing was a pair of iron stirrups, immense affairs embellished with heavy ornament, that had been

found by a party of explorers up in the jungles of the Petén. They are definitely of the time of the Conquest, and as we looked at them there arose before our mind's eye a picture of that incredible march of Cortéz and his men down through the swamps and over the mountains into Honduras. Perhaps, as has been suggested, there was no malaria there then. But leave out malaria. Take a few hundred picked soldiers, the best you can find anywhere, equip them only with what Cortéz had of weapons and of medical knowledge four hundred years ago, weigh them down with the pounds of iron and brass accouterments that were standard with the Spanish leather-jacket, and start them on that march today. The jungle, I believe, would lick them. I don't believe for a minute that they would make it. Yet Cortéz did. And it was only a punitive expedition at that, after Alvarado had performed his feats of arms up in the mountains to the south and west, undertaken to set in order some of the Hondureños who were not behaving as they should. You simply can't think of it without marveling at the toughness, the indomitable courage, the sheer ability to take it on the chin that those old fellows had. And here was this pair of massive stirrups mutely recalling the whole tremendous adventure.

It was better to leave the Museum thinking of those pioneering Spaniards and their fine talent for conquest than of their successors and their mediocre gifts with palette and brush. Yet as we went out we could not help noticing one canvas on the side wall of the hallway, "The Sentencing of Jesus," painted by a certain Tomás de Merlo who died in

1739. It was no worse than most of the others, but there was something odd about it, something neither of us could quite pin down. It was C. who put her finger on it at last. The bearded high priest—Caiaphas himself, perhaps?—who is looking at Christ so severely across the table, is frowning over a pair of precisely poised and meticulously drawn seventeenth-century spectacles.

Out in Aurora Park you will find the government's archaeological museum, far better worth a visit.

We drove out to the park, passing an old aqueduct, begun in 1791 to bring water to the city from the springs of Mixco and Acatán and still performing that service, occasionally abetted by sections of iron piping where earthquake shocks have made gaps in the original structure. Out in this direction is the miniature Eiffel Tower, erected to the memory of Barrios, and beyond it the penitentiary, very modern and formidable with a sprinkling of convicts in pink and white uniforms striped like peppermint candy, working on the flower beds under heavy guard. Just a little beyond it is Guatemala's Military Academy, directed by American army officers who come down on a two-year leave for the assignment. Mostly they seem to be Colonels, but become Generals in Guatemala's army as soon as they take charge, which makes it a bit difficult for a visiting American to know how to address them. Out this way, too, is the Reforma district, at the moment the City's booming residential area, where large new dwellings are doing their best to look like Hollywood Spanish or the kind of modern

design that is best described as "moderne." As far as weather and elevation go, it is not the best part of town but it is fashionable. Guatemala's well-to-do families, like our own, follow their leaders.

In the Aurora Park Museum you will find the story of the Maya written in stone.

You should by all means see it, too, before going down to Quiriguá or over to Copán to view the Mayan ruins *in situ*. Here in these bits of pottery, shell and jadeite, in these tall monoliths intricately carved, is all that is left of a culture already on the wane when the Spaniards came to give it its death blow; a culture perhaps not fitted to survive, but a culture that made Guatemala the center of a great civilization long before Columbus set sail for the Western world. You are not, of course, like the lady-tourist from Georgia who wandered over to ask us how much we thought all this jade would be worth if she could buy it, but even if you were you couldn't help the feeling of smallness, of newness that comes over even the least sensitive visitor as he examines these fragments of a great Yesterday. For ourselves we felt it even more after the sharp contrast with Today that we noted as we drove back to the hotel. At a busy corner we pulled up behind an Indian carrier, a large box-couch strapped across his back, hiding everything but his feet. He had his hand out to signal a left turn—a human carrier even though not equipped with a horn, is considered a vehicle—and he was vainly whistling through his teeth to attract the traffic officer's attention. The policeman saw our car and waved to us to go

round the Indian since we were driving straight ahead. When we looked back from across the street, the descendant of the Quiché lords who once ruled these mountains was still standing, his arm still patiently extended and from the look of his face still whistling for permission to go about his business.

There are, of course, other things to see in Guatemala City if you have time to look for and at them.

There is the cathedral, actually built of stone and not of plaster. There is the Parque Central in which you may sit round the fountain on painted benches and have your shoes polished while perambulators, nursemaids and children parade past as in any other park in any other city in the world. On holiday nights half a dozen colored floodlights are turned on the fountain, and the water jets and falls in incredible magneta, scarlet, blue and yellow cascades. It is this theatrical trick that gives the Guatemalteco a chance for one of his innumerable jokes at the expense of the Salvadoreño. El Salvador is Guatemala's Hoboken, always good for a gag, and the story goes that when the country cousins from down there come driving up to see a real city they bring bottles with them in order to take back some of the strange colored water from this magical spring. Near the Park, unfortunately blotting out part of the Cathedral, is a fine new bandstand or shell—*concha,* indeed, is the local word—in whose acoustical cavern the city band performs on Sunday evenings, and across on the other side of the square is a kind of barracky structure hous-

ing the military. Guatemala is soldierly in the extreme; no matter where you go you find detachments of small brown Indians from the hills, in blue denim trousers with white stripes down their sides hustling about under a non-commissioned officer, bound on some important mission or other. Part of their job is to stop strangers at state borders and find out where they are from, whither they are bound and for what reasons. They are never unpleasant about it; most of them grin very engagingly while you are writing down your name and business, and those who can't muster up a smile simply look as though they were doing their duty, which they are. But they are always there. I think it was Aldous Huxley who suggested that the country is so militarized because it has its eye on the other four Central American Republics, but that seems like an unwarranted exaggeration. Guatemala, I believe, is preoccupied with soldiering partly because soldiers have always been an important part of the Latin-American picture, and partly because they may be again at any moment—for internal rather than external reasons. Just now, everything in Guatemala is very peaceful and orderly. President Jorge Ubico has the situation well in hand, coffee is up again, the country is solvent. But there is no telling when or where some of the new-fangled social ideas may leak through into the minds of the Indians. And the Indian is something like eighty-five per cent of the population. After all, there is nothing like an army to discourage Ideas.

As to where the new notions might come from, there is only one country bordering on Guatemala that is really

dangerous in that respect. That is Mexico. And that is why it is not well to mention Mexico much when you are in Guatemala. Naturally no one will arrest you just for talking. Guatemala is not stupid enough, either, to go out of its way to antagonize a powerful and much larger neighbor by acts which might be construed as unfriendly. But Guatemala stiffens just a little and becomes politely noncommittal when the name of Mexico is mentioned. It is a bit like introducing the topic of Russia into a casual conversation with your banker, say. Guatemala is worried, not so much by anything definite that has happened as a result of having a neighbor distinctly on the pink side, but by the fear that something *might* happen. Occasional propagandists have trickled in, too, evading the strict guards at the border and distributing literature of a nature calculated to disturb the equanimity of the simple Indian who shouldn't be allowed to see or hear about such things as a New Social Order. We could get no frank answers when we asked what was done with such agents, but we gathered that they were escorted back to the border, prodded across and requested to shinny on their own side from then on. Probably that was really all, too. As I've said, Guatemala is far too shrewd to create an Incident when it can be avoided. Yet a fascistically inclined state—and Guatemala is that, in the broader sense of the term—must keep a constant watch on things; it cannot afford to permit any contrary ideas to get a foothold. And the most likely place from which such ideas may leak in is, most naturally, the country next door. Indeed, the one time we saw any crack in the mask of polite wariness

was when the newspapers carried the story that Trotsky was to be given asylum in Mexico. A shiver ran down the whole spine of Guatemala, from the mountains to the sea. Trotsky! The news was like a whisper of *"The bogeyman!"* to a child.

This, too, accounts for the remarkably efficient system of espionage that obtains in Guatemala. The government wants to know who you are, why you are in Guatemala, and if possible what your political, economic and social convictions may be. They are not so crude as to ask you; that wouldn't be the Latin-American way of doing it, anyway. But if you are a foreigner other than the members of the tourist groups that come and go, more or less sponsored by the steamship lines that bring them and under chaperonage all the time, then the government keeps its eye on you. It is said that most of the hotel employees, many of the store clerks and taxicab drivers, and of course all of the police are spies. In Guatemala City, for that matter, this is so thoroughly taken for granted that jokes are made about it. There they tell the old tale—you have probably heard it as a war-time yarn—about the lover who asked his sweetheart as he kissed her eyes, "And to whom do these belong, my darling?" "To you only!", was her reply. And so also for her cheeks and lips and forehead. But when he playfully pinched her ear and asked his fond question the answer was different. "Ah, no!" she said. "Those are for the Chief of Police!" The local word for a spy is *oreja,* an ear. And we learned to recognize that casual touching of the ear lobe with the fingers which means "Change the

subject! An *oreja* is near by!" To be sure, though it does sound melodramatic the European, accustomed to this sort of thing as he is since the rise of the dictatorships, might not even notice it. But two *Norteamericanos* found it a slight shock when they learned that in Guatemala one did not speak the name of the President. There is no law against it; nothing would happen to you if you did. But no one does. They say, obliquely, "This man," and then look to see if they have been overheard.

This man, General Jorge Ubico, is President of Guatemala which has been a Republic for a hundred and twenty-five years.

As a matter of actual fact rather than political theory, Guatemala has been in the hands of one kind of dictator or another for most of that time. And her case is not so different now. President Ubico heads a Republic, yes. He has served six years and is to serve six more. He was put where he is by an election and a plebiscite on the question of whether the country shouldn't perhaps dispense with the next election—a plebiscite at which the voter had to sign his ballot. This is to say that he is, to all intents and purposes, a dictator. The point, however, is that he is doing exactly the kind of job of dictating that his country seems to need, at least as far as an outsider may judge. One American described him to us in three words. "Ubico," he said, "is tough but honest."

An example of this is Guatemala's Law of Probity. Any public official who gets more than a certain salary must submit, when taking office, to a thorough accounting of his

personal property and bank accounts, including those of his wife and immediate family. When he steps out, he must allow the same check-up of his private affairs. If he seems to have accumulated more than is reasonable, he is asked to show cause. From what we heard he'd better be able to explain. President Ubico put that law on the books. What's more, he considers himself as coming under its requirements; he was checked when he went in and he expects to be checked again when he goes out.

As an executive he is perhaps not quite as efficient as he believes; that is to say, we saw evidence that he does not delegate duties any more than he can help. Because he is extraordinarily energetic, he keeps his fingers on the smallest odds and ends of detail. Very little happens that he does not know about, that does not get his personal attention. The municipal government of some village up in the highlands draws a voucher for three *quetzales,* eight *centavos;* before it is paid it is examined and approved over the firm, quick signature "Ubico," and so printed in the government's daily record. Is there trouble over in the Alta Vera Paz? As likely as not, President Ubico hops aboard his motorcycle—he is violently fond of motorcycling and other forms of speedy transport—and runs over to see what it's all about. The surprising thing, though, is that it is usually the escort that is tired out by the time the jaunt is over. President Ubico, well past middle age (he was military governor of the Alta Vera Paz thirty years ago) seems still to be able to outlast even his younger aides.

His history is more or less what you would expect. A

Guatemalan of Spanish descent, well educated and intelligent, he had part of his schooling in the United States and learned to speak English though he will not use it now if he can avoid it. He was an army officer—which is almost a prerequisite in Latin America if you are going into politics at all—and came up to the Presidency through successive services to his country, notably in helping to stamp out yellow fever in Guatemala when he was Governor of the State of Retalhuleu. The Rockefellers gave him a gold medal for that. In the early 1920's he served in the Cabinet of President Orellana, but retired to private life after his term was over. Nominated for the Presidency in 1926, he was defeated by the machinations of his opponent and retired again to the management of his *finca*. Then in 1930 he was elected for the regular six-year term. As has been said, he is now in office until 1942.

Perhaps the chief problem of his administration has been the matter of how to improve the lot of the Indian without handing him the world on a silver platter all at once and before he knows what to do with it.

There can be no question that the President has already done much for his Indians. One of his first moves was to destroy the system of slavery that had grown up over the generations, the system by which Tomas Tzuc, coffee-picker, might have to work out a debt contracted years before by his father, or even his grandfather. The *finqueros* were given two years to liquidate this system, and they did. Next, the President established a minimum wage law for the Indian, scaled according to the class in which he was

employed, as a part-time or full-time man or as a free-lance, a *voluntario* who owned his little farm and could work when and where he pleased. Duly set down in the books are the wages and ration-allowances for each group and the *finquero* must now stick to them. At the same time the Indian has to work. After all, if he doesn't, the coffee will not get picked. And if that happens, then Guatemala starves. So the Indian must work at least one hundred and fifty days a year—at, of course, the standard rates of pay. Tyranny? Well, what are you going to do? You can't judge the situation in Guatemala by comparing it with our own. You have, in your Indian, a human being whose standard of living is so far below that of our meanest working man that the two can't be mentioned in the same breath. You have, moreover, a human being who does not see any reason why he should work; who is not, by and large, infected by the getting-ahead bug; who, left to himself, would want only his few acres in the hills where he might raise his corn and beans, bothered by nobody. You can't get at such a man through the ordinary profit motive. Yet if you leave him to his own devices your country will be bankrupt in no time. No, a firm hand is necessary if Guatemala is to get anywhere at all. And President Ubico has that firm hand. His Indians must build roads; one week's work twice a year or one dollar is the law. And so the Indian toils on what will some day be fine highways. He may not use them, perhaps, but his children and grandchildren will. In the meantime the Indian is being taught discipline through service in the army, is learning about hygiene, becoming

used to the Spanish language which will eventually give him a sense of belonging to his country instead of merely to his tribe. Schools are being built, shoes are replacing flimsy sandals. The color and the atmosphere of the villages will disappear quickly, yes. But it is all part of the forward movement to which Guatemala is now firmly and happily committed. And it may be that the President is right; that by such legislation and such definite progress along a planned line Guatemala may be able to avoid the social upheavals which have wrought such destruction in Mexico.

For the President is determinedly a father to his Indians. They come marching down from the highland villages with the smallest grievances, and Ubico always sees them. The story is told of an Indian girl who came complaining that her husband was treating her badly. "What," the President asked, "is he doing?" The girl answered that he had run away with another woman. "Indeed," the President said. "And how long have you been married?" "Five years," the girl replied. "So?" Ubico remarked. "Well, if you haven't learned in five years how to hold your man, I am afraid I cannot tell you in five minutes!"

In the villages, too, there is a whole duplicate system of government. The Indian has his own *alcaldes* and *alguaziles,* duly elected to cooperate with the *Intendente,* or mayor, and his sub-officials. He may, through these men, bring complaints, put suggestions before the government, represent his tribal brothers in every way. Naturally, the purpose of the arrangement is to make it easier to govern the Indian, but it works both ways. As long as the Indian

is the sad, withdrawn, beaten little man he is at present, it will go on working, too. The real problem will come with the next generation, schooled, shod and instructed in cleanliness and the Spanish tongue. Then someone will have to think fast, unless President Ubico's plans prove successful. It is just possible that the readjustment will be made quietly, that the Indian, gradually raised, as the President is raising him, to a new level, will see that everything cannot be done at once. Meantime, Guatemala's middle-class goes about energetically assuring the foreigner that the Indian is Happy. "Oh, yes," they say, "the Indian is happy. He has all he wants. He is a very happy man!" Even before you have a chance to see for yourself, you begin to doubt; the protest is made too often. And after you have seen something of the country you know your doubts were justified. When the Guatemalteco insists upon telling you how happy the Indians are, he is the small boy whistling as he goes past the graveyard. Nevertheless it is hard to see what else could be done now. It is still harder to guess what will come of it.

We had seen our sights, asked our questions, arranged with the most obliging Consulate we have ever seen on our travels to hold our mail until we sent for it, and were all ready to pick up and leave for our jaunt into the highlands. But there was one night left in the City. What to do with it?

Two friends made up our minds for us—not American residents but Guatemalans who knew their city well.

Their point was that we really ought to go slumming just once before we left. The tourist sees the hotels, the good restaurants, the railway station, the museums and parks, the stores and statues. Well and good; we had seen most of these things, certainly all we needed to look at. Why, then, shouldn't we have a look at a different side of the City? After all, even if you cut out all the tourists, the foreign population and the local aristocracy, there are still a hundred thousand or so of the lower middle class who eat, drink and entertain themselves here without ever going near the haunts of the upper crust. How about showing us something of how those people lived? We agreed that it sounded logical and put ourselves in their hands.

The first thing to do was to have a pre-prandial drink. For that, we drove to the very outskirts of the town, in fact out to the cemetery. Across from its main gate is a small *cantina,* an unpretentious affair, no dressed-up spot, just a place of the people. The *bocas*—we say hors d'œuvres, imitating the French instead of the Spanish—are especially tasty there, and besides our friends wanted us to sample the local *olla,* a type of distilled liquor something like brandy. We had it, and while it may not be quite as strong as the Mexican *tequila* it is strong enough. A dozen or so Indians, barefooted and with their handkerchiefs carefully tied round their mouths to keep out the bad night air excepting when they drank, watched us as we suppressed the inclination to blink after we put down the tiny glass. Both of us said that it was grand but that we wouldn't have another, no thank you, and bit into our *bocas* to take away the worst

of the burning in our throats. Opposite us on the wall some talented local gentleman had painted a large likeness of one of the North American characters universally admired in Guatemala—Mickey Mouse. The unmistakable Indian cast of countenance that the painter had given him would really be worth Walt Disney's coming down to Central America to see.

The *bocas* were hot and spicy, though it was a little difficult to determine just what had gone into them. In the case of those made of raw vegetables we could see the tomato and onion plainly enough, but even a morsel of uncooked food is likely to trouble the foreigner and we stuck to the messier type, scooped onto their little pieces of bread and looking something like Hungarian goulash. When our friends had another *olla* we begged for beer and got it, a heavenly cool draft after the fiery liquor and peppery tid-bits we had been eating. However, it wasn't until we had finished and come out into the street that we saw the real reason why our guides had chosen that special spot to take us. They took us so that we might see what the *cantina* was called. Here it stood, straight across from the gloomy grave-yard gate, and frosted into the glass of its twin swinging doors was its fantastically appropriate name, "*El Último Adiós*"—The Last Good-Bye!

We ate in another little restaurant of the people, down-town again and overlooking one of the pleasant small parks. It was a clean and very simple meal; black bean soup, chicken *mole,* stuffed chile-peppers and coffee. Our Indian waiter grew a trifle sadder than normal when we told him

A TEN-YEAR-OLD MAIDEN DIPS AND POURS CAREFULLY
AT THE FOUNTAIN IN PALÍN MARKET PLACE.

THE LOVELY CARVED MAIN DOORWAY OF MERCED CHURCH IN ANTIGUA.

ANOTHER OF MERCED'S FINE STONE DOORWAYS.

THIS OLD MONKS' RETREAT HAS STOOD UNTOUCHED SINCE THE QUAKE OF 1773 WRECKED IT AND ALL ANTIGUA.

PATTERNS AND TEXTURES IN STONE AND PLASTER GIVE THE PHOTOGRAPHER IN ANTIGUA PLENTY TO THINK ABOUT.

ANTIGUA'S PALACE OF THE CAPTAINS-GENERAL, WITH THE CONE OF AGUA LOOMING BEHIND IT.

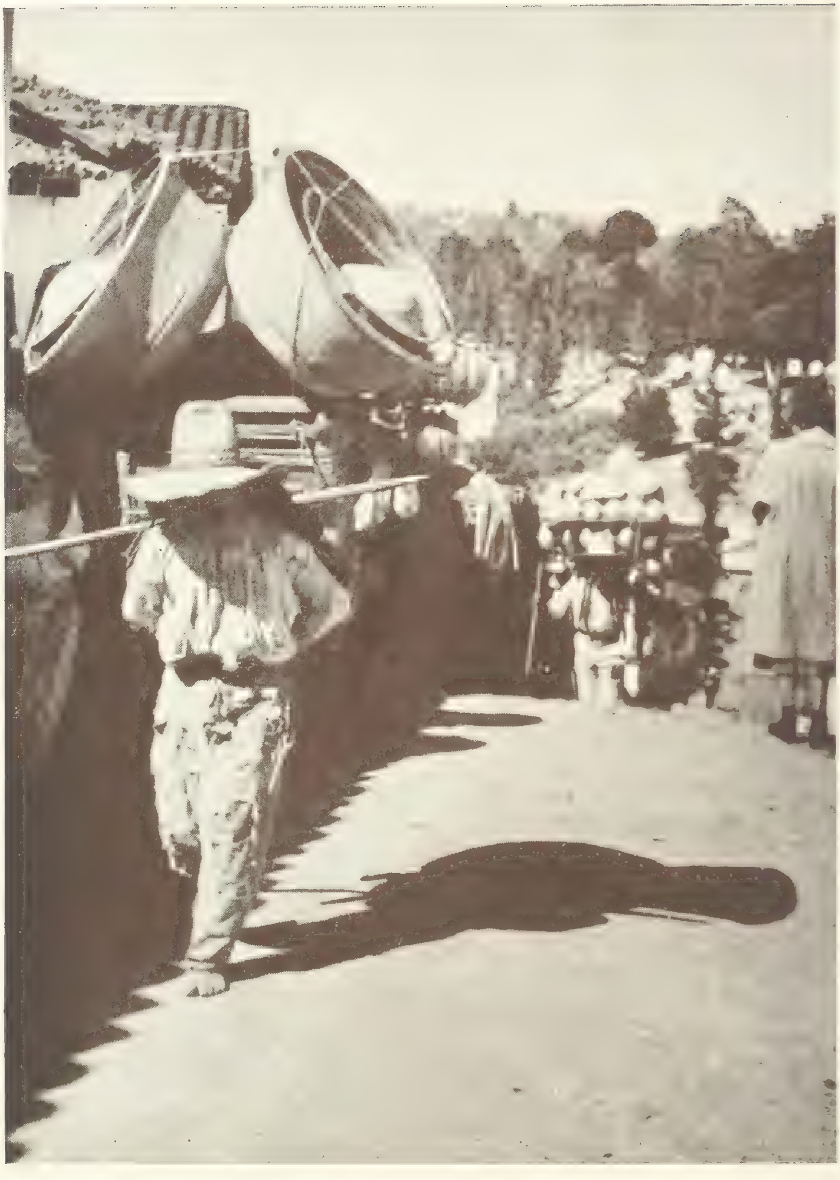
ACROSS ANTIGUA'S PLAZA THE PALACE OF THE MOST NOBLE AYUNTAMIENTO NOW BOASTS A MODERN CLOCK.

LIGHT AND SHADOW IN A CORNER OF THE RUINED CONVENT OF THE CAPUCHINAS.

A TREE GREW UP WHERE ONCE THE CAPUCHIN NUNS WALKED QUIETLY IN THE MASSIVE CLOISTERS.

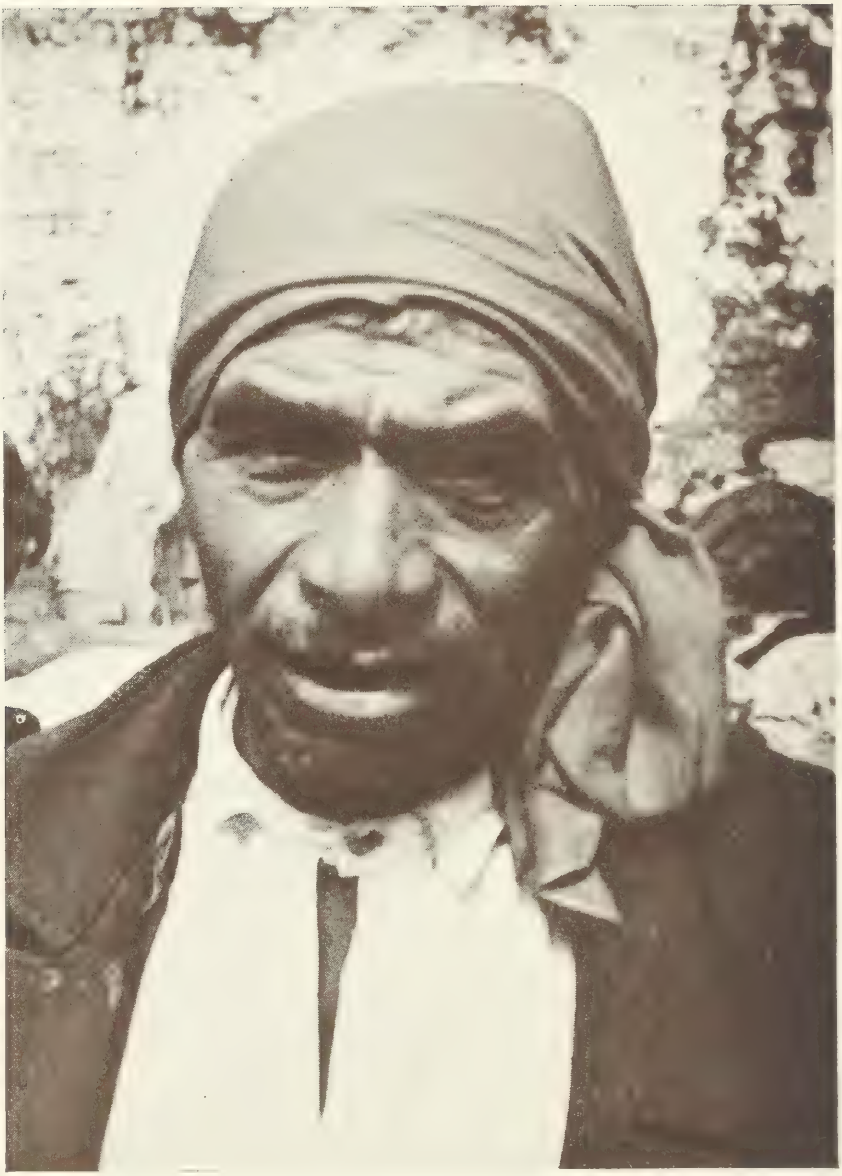
THE INNER COURT OF ANTIGUA'S UNIVERSITY OF SAN CARLOS BORROMEO, NOW A MUSEUM OF SPANISH COLONIAL RELICS.

SAN PEDRO VOLCANO RISES SHEER ABOVE THE BLUE WATERS OF ATITLÁN, ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST SPLENDID LAKES.



PROCESSIONS OF EARTHENWARE POTS COME OVER THE HILLS TO MARKET.

THIS OLD INDIAN COUPLE FROM THE HILLS STOPPED TO REST AND DRINK ON THE HOT AND DUSTY ROAD TO TOWN.



A QUICHÉ INDIAN FROM THE HIGH COUNTRY, WILLING
TO POSE BUT A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT IT.

SIMPLE POTTERY STACKED AND WAITING FOR CARRIERS TO TAKE IT TO MARKET.

THESE VILLAGE CHILDREN SAW NO HARM IN A CAMERA, BUT RATHER LIKED THE IDEA.

we had no room for any sweet, but he was pleased that we had enjoyed the *chiles* so well. The cigarettes of Guatemala are strong and sickly-sweet, as if the tobacco were soaked in molasses, so we smoked American brands with our *café negro* and wished that Guatemala's tobacco monopoly had not talked the government into forbidding the importation of Mexican cigarettes—*Monte Carlos* for choice. As we sat, adding just a dash more coffee essence and then a drop more hot water to our cups, and then more essence to keep the proportions right, our friends explained where they were taking us. What they wanted us to see was a dance-hall; not a polite, taxi-dance establishment like those in the United States, policed, lighted, open, noisy, but a small one frequented by the working classes. It wasn't really much more than a *cantina,* really, so they said; but they knew the old woman who ran it and though it was perhaps a shade on the tough side, it would be all right for us to pay it a visit, especially so early in the evening.

The drive was a long one, down through side streets and cross-alleys, narrower and narrower as we went along. Somewhere down this way was the railroad station—or was it? Certainly we were in a part of the City we had not seen before. Wholesale grocery warehouses thrust their signs out over the sidewalk, and sandwiched in between them were dubious looking doorways, half dark, most of them occupied by a lounger or two, sometimes by a couple in close conversation. We had almost made up our minds that we would just as leave forego the adventure and get back to the comfortable red and blue neon signs of Sixth Avenue,

when our hosts pulled up at a closed door over which hung the sign, *La Mimosa.* This, they explained, was it.

There was a small group gathered round the doorway, working-class men and boys, some with sandals, most without. They parted for us grudgingly, and a young fellow giggled in the shrill Indian way and said something about *gringos.* Then the door opened and we were inside, dazzled by half a dozen bare bulbs that hung from the ceiling, deafened by a *marimba,* a bull-fiddle, a saxophone and drums, all going full blast in the half-basement room. The tune was "The Music Goes Round and Round," but in that strange place we did not recognize it at once. It was just music, loud and violent, almost vicious; that was all we felt at first.

The room was perhaps twelve feet square and there were no tables at which our group could sit. We stood along the wall trying to look as if we were having a good time but not as though we were examining the animals in the cages; perhaps you have experienced that awkward sensation. Then our hosts had found the old woman, introduced us and explained that we would like to buy her a drink if she would find a place where we could all have one together. Chairs and a small iron table were produced from somewhere and set up in the entrance-way itself and we all sat down to sip a local liqueur that tasted something like anisette. The *marimba* and its associated instruments had swung into "Rancho Grande"; you can prohibit Mexican cigarettes but Mexican music is something else. While we drank we looked round and asked questions.

The admission charge was two *centavos;* we hadn't paid it, but then we were buying liqueurs. There was no charge for ladies; men paid five *centavos* a dance, picked their partners from among the hostesses and kept their hats on. As far as we could see there were five hostesses, all plump but one, who was a shade lighter than the others and tall in a tight blue rayon dress. All of them were dancing all the time; there must have been twenty men in that small, crowded space and each of them wanted to dance every minute. None of them looked at us at all; they went about their business exactly as if we were not there. That is not embarrassing in a large space where you can feel at least a little bit as though you were by yourself. But in a room as small as that it gives you a queer feeling. The old woman saw how we felt—she was as sharp as a needle—and asked if there wasn't something we would like the orchestra to play. We said there was. Did they know the tune, "*Marimba*"? Since the Mexican composer, Agustín Lara, had written it in Guatemala City, especially for the finest *marimba* band in the country, it was to be supposed they might, and they did. They swung into it with vigor, stimulated by the fact that we had ordered them a bottle of beer apiece. The most buxom of the hostesses, fairly popping out of her scarlet gown, grinned at us as she went past in the arms of an elderly Indian who wore his hat too far down over his face for him to see that she had recognized the presence of the foreigners, and we were just beginning to feel accustomed to the place when C. nudged me. A door on our left, one of several that opened from the dance-floor,

had been left halfway open. We could see a curlicued white-painted iron bed, a rickety dresser decorated with bits of lace and paper flowers stuck in the edges of the mirror. Pasted on the wall was a faded print of the Princess Elizabeth cut from some magazine. And, as we stared, a sheepish middle-aged *ladino* workman—at least he wore shoes—shambled off the dance-floor and into the room, with him the hostess in blue. She closed the door, not hard but definitely.

Have I said that the people of Guatemala are great jokers? Our friends had been waiting for the look of stunned realization that dawned in our faces at that moment. On that note we left. We had, we felt, Seen Life in Guatemala City.

IV

WHEN we said good-bye to Guatemala City there were a few clouds in the sky and a light wind was blowing. The rainy season had lasted unaccountably long, so everyone assured us, and we might have a shower or two before we reached Antigua. Our driver, however, said he knew better and he was right. As we reached the outskirts even the ring of cloud around the top of Fuego dissolved and we could see the little streamer of smoke that always curls from its crater. Agua's perfect cone was clear and sharp against the blue, and we headed almost directly toward it, since Antigua lies in the Valley of Panchoy, almost at its base.

Antigua is a city of churches without roofs, of ruined houses and broken walls. Such life as inhabits it is almost entirely because of the city's interest to the visitor. There are two pleasant hotels catering to the tourist, and there are a few stores and newer dwellings. Poor families have set

up their simple machinery of living among the ruins everywhere, you are quite likely to walk into the shell of an old convent and find today's wash drying on the line where yesterday's fountain stood. But in general Antigua is a city of relics, the finest example of Colonial Spain to be found in the Americas. The volcanoes, Auga, Fuego and Acatenango, look down on it with the same calm impartiality with which they destroyed it. The tiny Río Pensativo (how apt a name!) runs gently through the edge of town; the mountain ranges cut off the wind, and Antigua sleeps peacefully in its warm hollow. Once the most brilliant capital city between Mexico and Peru, it is content now to live in its past. It was that past we wanted to relive in our imaginations. Antigua is the Guatemala-that-used-to-be, the Guatemala of the Conquest. We couldn't very well come to this country and miss it.

As has been said before, one of the good ways to see a lot quickly is to make yourself temporarily a part of an organized tourist trip. The method has its disadvantages, of course. But even if you are going to stay longer, it is an excellent thing to absorb the guides' patter, cover the ground with them in their kangaroo tourist-leaps, and then fill in the gaps yourself at your leisure. In fact, it is the ideal way to do it.

For that reason we had chosen to drive to Antigua by way of Palín, where the tourists who come by way of the West Coast port of San José disembark from the train to take automobiles and proceed by way of Antigua to Guatemala City, seeings sights furiously as they go. Because we

were early, we asked our driver to take a slightly more roundabout route, so that we might have a view of Guatemala's week-end resort, Lake Amatitlán. Coming up from the port we had caught a glimpse of the Lake but that was all, and this way we could get just a bit closer to it. Besides, we could perhaps get a glimpse of the President's house. We had heard that he lived here part of the time, and we were curious to see just where.

All the way we had passed people; the roads were full of them. Indian women, their broad, shallow baskets lightly balanced on their heads, walked to market with the swift, sliding gait and the upright carriage that is characteristic of all these tribes. Little girls trotted along, too, each with a smaller basket or an earthenware jar resting on its little circular cloth pad. One old woman, blowing cigarette smoke like a steam engine, swinging her arms rhythmically and striding fast, grinned as we passed and whiffed a blast in our direction, but most of them looked at us and looked away again, indifferently. After all, they must have seen so many tourists, so many *gringos* down from North America to stare and giggle and poke cameras at them. Or perhaps they looked that same way at the first they saw. The impassivity of the Indian is hard to fathom.

On the road that turns off and drops down to the lake there was hardly any travel at all. Now and then we passed small groups of workers doing their prescribed days of duty on the roads. But for the most part there was no one and we swooped round curves and into little clumps of trees and out of them again as though we were the only people awake

and about. The light breeze that had blown us out of the City was gone now and we could smell the aromatic fragrance of the nameless shrubs and flowers that bordered the steep trail. The volcanoes followed us, tall and sheer; we were conscious of them peering over our shoulders as we plunged down in low gear. The Lake was not in sight; some oddity of the road's location conceals the water until you are almost upon it. Then it bursts on you all at once. It would be magnificent if it were blue and bright, and maybe it is at some seasons of the year. But it was brown and sullen again, as it had been when we saw it on our first day. Away out toward the far shore a speed-boat was cutting circles, rushing like a hooked fish aimlessly round and round, all alone on that dun expanse. Our driver, who had stopped the car so that we might satisfy ourselves with the view, whispered that it was the President's boat and that it was the President running it. We asked how he knew, and he said that it must be the President because no one else in Guatemala would be going so fast. "That," he added, pointing toward a whitish speck, set against dark trees a little back from the shore, "is the house of the President, where he lives." We said, "Oh, yes, indeed. The President's house! Hmm!" because that seemed to be expected of us, but it might have been any house anywhere. Neither of us could have said exactly why we had expected more. Possibly it was because President Ubico had taken shape in our minds as a sort of heroic figure, what with the whispering and nodding and looking over shoulders that always occurred when anyone referred to him. He should

have lived in a castle with towers and turrets, or at least a long shining palace, probably with uniformed guards at all the gates.

We swept past the many week-end cottages on the shore of Amatitlán, most of them as modern as something out of *The Architectural Forum* for next month, built of poured concrete and steel, with tiny piers for speed boats and toy garages for the small German cars so popular in Guatemala. At the end of the lake they were building a new park, with wide spaces of green grass and assorted flower beds. We agreed that Amatitlán in the warm season would be a pleasant place to come to, though in November it was still a touch on the cold side. To be sure, Guatemala is in the tropics; yes. But there is also the altitude. In the back of our minds was something we had heard the day before—that at Quezaltenango, up in the real highlands, where we would be in five days, the *pilas* or public washing fountains had frozen over every night for a week. Tropics or no tropics.

From Amatitlán down to Palín is only a short run but the road still drops and the little town is hot even at ten o'clock in the morning. The train wasn't in yet, because the cruise ship had docked late, and we loitered about the station platform, watching the growing crowd of Indian women in the Palín costume of blue skirt and short white *huipil.* They were quiet and reserved, though they offered us their baskets of fruit; but the small boys were another matter. You don't find many beggars in Guatemala City, and those you do see are not little boys but professionals chiefly. Here the

tourist trains are beginning to spoil them. It is difficult to say what makes the American throw money out of train windows in a foreign country when he doesn't do it in his own. He does it, however, and though the children pick it up fast enough they think privately that he is an idiot. We were just asking a few of the more importunate young racketeers why we should give them money for nothing when the train drew in and a shower of nickels rattled on the platform. The tourists had arrived.

The excitement did not last long. Some twenty or thirty Americans got off the train and disposed themselves in the tourist automobiles with the air of people who know they are Doing the Right Thing and who intend to go on doing it if it kills them. The rest, who preferred to go straight on to Guatemala City, bought a few odds and ends of fruit from the Indian women, tried out their Spanish on the scrambling urchins, yawned and walked up and down the train aisles. Then the whistle tooted, the train pulled out and everybody went home. Within a minute the platform was deserted. The tour cars had left in a cloud of dust and we followed them. We had come down here to see how the tour-business was managed and we were going to stay with it.

There was a brief stop in the plaza of Palín, where the chief object of interest is the immense, much-photographed *ceiba* whose branches spread over the whole market-place. It was not market day, however, and the whole party moved on, though not until we had time to recognize one of the

women who had been trying to sell fruit at the station. She had walked fast with her basket on the off chance of making just one more sale, and we rewarded her perseverance by investing in a banana apiece. Exotic and delicious as other fruits may be in the tropics, the stranger is better off not to try them excepting in a good hotel or in the house of a friend. If they are overripe they are almost certain to trouble the unaccustomed stomach, and unless you know what they ought to be like when they're just right, you have no way of telling what you are getting.

The way to Antigua lies uphill from here, the road winding along *barrancas* and down into little valleys and pockets in the mountain-side and then up into the hills again. Several times we saw orchids that sharp eyes had missed, high in a tree-crotch or clinging to the sheer side of the trunk. So far the government has not forbidden the indiscriminate plucking of orchids by vendors who can make a few *centavos* for their trouble, even in so orchid-filled a country as this. They will come to it some day, though; they'll have to unless they are willing to have the countryside completely despoiled of one of its great attractions.

We were climbing the flank of Agua herself when another little *pueblo* came into sight—Santa María de Jesús, some 6500 feet high, on a little shelf in the volcano's ribs. All the cars pulled into the plaza in front of the church and stopped. Evidently there was something here to see.

The church itself was a pleasant old building, simple as all these churches are compared to the violent *churrigueresque* decoration you see in Mexico. In a corner of the

plaza, under a thatched shed, a *marimba* was playing and women were weaving the cloth they carry round with them, ready to work on it wherever they can find a spot to tie one end-stick while they squat and lean against the belt hitched to the other. The tourists gathered round and watched, dutifully inspected the church, left coins for the *marimberos,* strained their necks peering up at the top of Agua. Two squinted anxiously through the view-finder of their movie-camera; for some obscure reason they took turns photographing each other walking in at the church door. The plaza was hot in the glare of the sun, but a sweet cool breeze came down the side of the mountain and reminded us that though this was the tropics it was also the mountains. The fountain plashed softly and at our elbow a very polite voice said *"Buenos días!"* It was the *Intendente,* come to welcome us to his village.

The Mayor of Santa María de Jesús is an amiable and charming gentleman. Our driver had brought him over because he knew that we came from San Francisco, in California, and the Mayor, Señor Molina, once lived in San Francisco himself, and wrote for a Spanish newspaper. Also, it appeared, the Mayor had taken it upon his conscience to see that the mules were arranged for. We were a trifle startled. "Mules?" we asked. "What mules?" Why, for the midnight climb up to the crater of Agua, naturally. Señor Molina would see to it that we got good, sure-footed animals, safe ones and of good temper and willing to keep moving. It would be his pleasure to do this.

Then it all came back to us. Now that we thought of it,

something had been said about Agua and mules. When the Clark people had made out our itinerary they had included the climb to the top of Agua by moonlight so that we might see the sun rise over Guatemala, and we had agreed that it sounded like the thing to do. That had been in Guatemala City, though, from which point Agua looks high, to be sure, but not at all intimidating. There has been no life in the crater for centuries, and we had thought of the whole thing as a sort of mild ride up a rather steep hill. But from the little public square of Santa María it was something else. Agua towered right there; we could almost reach out and touch the slope; the sides seemed to go straight up. High above the strip of thin feathery cloud that cut across the mountain three-quarters of the way to the top, the crater looked severely remote and cold and difficult. We were not, to put it frankly, enthusiastic.

Still, what can you do when everyone is so matter-of-fact, when the business is practically settled? We found ourselves saying weakly, "Oh, yes. Of course! Day after tomorrow, at midnight. Yes, indeed. Two mules at two dollars a mule for the trip. Oh, quite satisfactory. Naturally!" Naturally? It was the most unnatural thing we had ever done in our lives. But we were in for it. Two more days and we would somehow make our way up Agua by the light of the moon. We would watch the sunrise from a chilly rock twelve thousand, three hundred and ten feet in the air; the Mayor was very exact about the figures. And, of course, there were the mules. Neither of us knew very much about mules.

We thanked the Mayor and turned round to find the rest of our cavalcade gone. Where, though, was the *marimba?* What had become of the weavers? They had gone too. And then we saw the point. This was a tourist show, run on schedule, and we had spoiled it for ourselves by staying until the scenery was struck and the players had gone home. Not, however, the entire cast. A tiny girl, just able to reach over the edge of the fountain, was dipping up water and pouring it into an *olla* nearly as big as herself that rested on the stone coping. She was so graceful about it that C. asked if we might take her picture. She opened her eyes very wide but said yes in a small voice and concentrated again on her pouring. It is one of our best pictures. As for the plaza of Santa María de Jesús, well, we would see it again. By moonlight, at midnight, in two more days.

The run from Santa María to Antigua is a short one; twenty minutes does it. You come down quite sharply, since Antigua is 1500 feet lower, and the curving highway gives you some beautiful chances to look out over the golden Valley of Panchoy where the old city lies. There were more orchids, magnificent loops and hairpin turns in the stony road, and always, below us, acres and acres of coffee, running up canyons in dark green, shiny rows, sheltered by thinner rows of tall trees planted to shade the capricious berry which must neither have too much sun or too little. At one moment there was the city spread out beneath us; then we were suddenly at it. Not the least of Antigua's charms is the curious way in which you come to the city all at once, without realizing how close you are.

We entered by the Alameda del Calvario, shaded and quiet, the ideal introduction to the peculiar peace of the ruined city. The streets were almost deserted; on both sides were the silent ruins, overgrown with grasses, cracked and fallen yet possessing an enormous dignity. Our driver named them as we passed, but you can't absorb and remember new names when you are occupied with new emotions. Later we would take Antigua slowly, visit these ancient tumbled palaces and convents, come to know them one at a time, perhaps even grow friendly with them. But our first sight of them inspired in us a gentle melancholy we could not shake off. Can you remember how you felt at seventeen on an autumn evening full of the smoke of burning leaves? All the old sadness of the world flowed through your veins, you didn't know why. You didn't know what to do about it but there it was. Antigua did something like that to us, even in broad daylight. In a sort of trance we let ourselves be carried past these splendid remains. Even when we were welcomed at the Hotel Aurora by the buxom, beaming and capable Señora Asturias, even when we sat and waited for lunch in a patio filled with the scarlet, pink and purple of bougainvillea and hibiscus and the penetrating, bright warmth of the mountain sun, we still felt the lonely, faded beauty of Antigua outside, all around us. But when I said something about it C. had a more practical suggestion. We hadn't, she reminded me, eaten anything for nearly six hours. Just perhaps our attack of aesthetic hyper-sensibility was due to plain ordinary emptiness.

After lunch we slept, frankly and unashamedly. Antigua

does that to you, too. Why its airs should be more relaxing than those of Guatemala City I do not know; the altitude is about the same. But friends had told us that Antigua was the most restful place in the world, and we were inclined to believe them. They had added a saying old in Guatemala, "To live in Antigua you must have a good conscience!" The silence of that tranquil afternoon showed us what they meant. In the mind lapped by such perfect peace the merest whisper of guilty recollection would echo like a shout.

Later, in the twilight, we walked in the shady square, looking up now and then at the lavender peak of Agua, so close that it is a part of everything in Antigua. There was life in the little park; people strolled through and around the paths that led past the central fountain; children played and boys waved shoe-shine boxes at us. But it was slow, easy, tempered movement. Even the soldiers, smart here in well-fitting khaki, did not set down their heels as sharply as in the capital. We sat for a while under a pepper tree, listening to the cool trickle of the fountain, and gradually the sense of newness wore away. The lovely, shadowy arches of the Palace of the Captains-General seemed friendly now, old but not unhappy. Over to our left the white front of the Cathedral was serene and calm in the early starlight, and from somewhere we caught a faint odor of wood smoke and spicy cooking. We walked back through the darkening streets for our eight o'clock dinner and found that we already had a friend. Someone in the city had written Colonel Cipriani, Governor of the department, that we were coming and he had called to make us wel-

come. His energetic handshake completed our adjustment. Antigua was not strange any more.

Ordinarily Antigua is quiet, peaceful, a drowsy little place given over to its memories. But on tourist days it is something else.

Yesterday's little group did not stay overnight; they left us after lunch at the hotel to go up to Guatemala City, make the regular rounds, drink a free rum cocktail and get back to the ship. But today another group arrived from the Atlantic side, and the hotel and the town took on a totally different aspect.

Still working on our principle that it is a good thing to join the professionally organized sightseeing units for a day at a time and then go over the same ground later, we piled into one of the Clark cars. *"Vámonos!"* said C. Our driver cocked an eye at her over his shoulder. "Sure," he said. "Let's go!" He told us later that he had driven a taxi in New York for twelve years.

There were four others in our car; a couple from Chicago on their way round the world by way of such countries as they happened to want to see (and a very sensible way to do it, too), a boy of eighteen or so, unattached, and a bony lady of indeterminate age who confided to all of us that she had been in Peru and Albania, though she didn't say why she had chosen those particular countries. "And now I'm in Guatemala!" she added. There seemed to be no answer to that.

Our driver-guide knew his business. One after another

we visited the notable ruins. In the Convent of the Capuchinas, where the cloisters miraculously withstood the earthquake, we found the week's washing hung out to dry in the sunny central patio and four looms set up in what may have been the kitchen two centuries ago. Our eighteen-year-old—we named him The Young Visiter—took movies industriously, and the bony lady bought a luncheon set, made to American specifications, from the weavers.

We saw the fine old Merced Church, coming to it through the great Arch of Santa Catarina over which, concealed from the public gaze, the nuns of Santa Catarina convent used to pass to their annex across the street. One of the most delightful of all Antigua's legends centers about Merced and its monastery. As Dorothy Popenoe tells it in her little book about the city, the captain of a vessel about to sail from Spain to the New World was approached by a stranger who gave him a sealed chest with instructions to deliver it to the prelate of the Monastery of Merced, in the City of Santiago Guatemala—which, of course, is now Antigua. The box arrived in due course and was opened in the presence of the religious authorities, who were astonished to find it contained an image of Nuestra Señora de la Merced which gave forth an exquisite perfume. This was found to come from a fragrant liquid which exuded from a wound in the side of the saint, and this liquid, when applied to sore or afflicted parts, immediately made them whole. The old chronicler, Father Manuel Garrida, wrote down the whole story just as he found it carefully preserved in the archives of the monastery. But no one ever learned

the identity of the mysterious stranger who had sent the image. Our guide knew the story but could cast no further light on the source of the image, nor could he tell us whether it remained in Antigua or whether, if it did, the exquisite healing perfume still rose from it. He did know, though, that the proper place from which to photograph the beautiful carved stone façade of the main door was from behind an iron gate at right angles to it; the man from the National Geographic had taken his picture from that spot, and he knew what was what. We admitted that Mr Marden did indeed know what he was doing, and dutifully pointed our cameras, opening the gate just a few inches in order to make our picture different from his. Afterward, at the request of the Young Visiter, C. obligingly walked back and forth before the door twice so that he might have some motion in his motion-pictures. We never found out where that boy came from, but in some American parlor C. is condemned now, until the film wears out, to walk to and fro across a sheet borrowed from the linen-closet, while our earnest young friend discourses to his friends on his Guatemalan Adventure.

At the Cathedral we walked in the ruined nave where one arch, cracked but still complete, shows faintly the magnificence that once was Antigua's chief house of worship. Alvarado himself, his wife the Doña Beatriz de la Cueva, and that rugged old soldier-historian Bernal Díaz del Castillo are all said to have been buried here, but so far their tombs have not been found. Father Alvarez, however, says he knows where they are, and he has been

superintending such digging as he can get funds for. Money is scarce, though, and while some unimportant relics have been found it is difficult to carry forward the work. I hope Father Alvarez is right. If he really turns up those graves it will be one in the eye for the skeptics.

Handsomest of all the buildings is the Royal and Pontifical University of San Carlos Borromeo, inaugurated in 1678, though its fine carved doorway is only a century old; it was a gift from an earnest patron of the arts and sciences in 1843. Perhaps because it was especially solidly built, the University did not suffer as much as the rest of the city in the disaster of 1773, and it is now kept scrupulously neat and used as a museum for religious paintings, portraits of elder statesmen, lawyers, bishops and the like. Shrewdly placed—those old builders knew what they were doing—its long open court frames Agua perfectly; the volcano fits into the picture as though it were a backdrop painted for the purpose.

In Ciudad Vieja—the Old City which was destroyed in 1541 by the flood that poured down from Agua—we saw what our guide told us was the home of Doña Beatriz who made the fatal mistake of taking shelter with her maids-in-waiting upstairs in her private chapel. The flood swept them all away. The body of *La Sin Ventura*—The Luckless One, as she has been called ever since—was found next day, still clinging to the cross. But the few mossy stones we looked at are probably not the remains of the Doña Beatriz' home at all. Authorities differ, the best opinion being that there is no vestige left of that dwelling, and

that these ruins are a corner of what was the cathedral of the Old City. Still they were impressive enough. Instinctively we glanced up at Agua. There was the dent in the lip of the crater, seven thousand feet above us, whence the water is supposed to have rushed when the lake burst through its wall. There were the deep grooves carved by the flood in its irresistible descent. Tomorrow—the thought struck us with horrid force—we were going to climb all the way up there. On mules.

In the evening there was a *marimba* set up in the Aurora's patio and everybody danced on the smooth tiles to a fantastic mélange of American and Mexican tunes. Our bony lady asked coyly if she could try to play and hammered out a lame "Yankee Doodle" once or twice before she gave it up, to the relief of the *marimberos* who were very bored by the performance. The couple from Chicago, not typical tourists at all, sat silently and took it all in. A small boy who said he was nine and looked more like five danced in his bare feet with ineffable grace and collected five-*centavo* pieces afterward with the air of a virtuoso accepting no more than his due. It was at this point that our Young Visiter asked the long-suffering guide whether it was possible to buy a *machete,* one of those two-foot, wicked-looking knives that every Indian carries. He wanted to take it back to the States with him for a souvenir. It was such an exotic thing, so suggestive of all the romance of Central America. The guide said yes; any hardware store carried *machetes.* They were manufactured by Collins of Hartford, Connecticut.

V

THE night climb up Agua is something one is glad to have accomplished; it is as well to put it that way, definitely in the past, not needing to be done again.

Because C. did not feel up to it—a *papaya* one day too old was to blame—I acquired another companion for the ascent, Louis Halle, whose book about Guatemala I had read before leaving the States. He had seen most of the country but had never been up Agua and wanted to make the ascent. At Santa María mules had been ordered for two; our friend Señor Molina had taken care of that. What difference who rode the other mule? So the arrangement was made. We counted sweaters; the crater is 12,000 feet and more, and very cold. Our landlady, the helpful Señora Asturias, had food ready; hard-boiled eggs, sandwiches, thermos bottles of coffee, hot and sweet. A fellow guest supplemented this with crackers and imported cheese. Señor

Logan, a wise North American who lives in Antigua, came round with a woolen scarf which he assured me I would be glad to have. Halle slipped a small flask of cognac into his pocket, feeling that it would do no harm to have it along; we slung cameras about our necks, made sure we had cigarettes and matches. Sitting in the dim patio of the hotel, the tiny wings of tropical insects brushing the single light-bulb that hung near us, we heard our driver's horn. Twenty-five minutes to Santa María and we would actually be starting up the mountain. A sleepy boy had stayed up to let us out and lock the gate after us. He and C. wished us luck and we drove off into the night.

In the dark plaza of the village our driver deposited us, honked twice, promised to call for us at ten o'clock next morning and departed.

No one, apparently, had heard the horn. There were no lights, no people. The plaza seemed less dark as we got used to the moonlight; there was the fountain where we had photographed the little girl, beyond it the broad steps of the church. But where were the mules? Where was the *mozo* who had been promised us as a guide? Where was anybody at all? We ventured a modest "Hey!" without results. I tried "Yow!" which didn't help either. "Yoo-Hoo!" seemed a bit delicate under the circumstances. What to do? Halle solved it finally with an ear-splitting "Wa-heee!" something like a rebel yell. That did the business. A door opened and a boy, still half asleep, tottered out, took a look at our well-wrapped forms and disappeared through a gate. We were wondering if he knew what we wanted

when he came back, leading not the mules we had expected but two rickety white horses, saddled and ready. In the moonlight they looked like the ghosts of horses.

Now it happens that a horse is an animal I know nothing about. Once before I had been on a horse, back in the forgotten days of the World War when we were sitting out the Armistice in camp. The Adjutant, who had been a cavalry captain before his promotion to paper-work, conceived the notion that all staff officers ought to take equitation twice a week for the good of their souls and their livers. The memory of my first and only two-hour ride is not a pleasant one. I was able to get off the animal at the end of it, but just barely able. Then and there I had made up my mind that even if it came to court-martial I would never, so help me, go near a horse of any kind, sort or description again. I can still hear the Adjutant's laugh when I told him.

But pride is a curious thing. Halle had mounted and was fiddling with the rope bridle, adjusting himself in the uncomfortable Guatemalan saddle, lighting a cigarette. Our *mozo* had appeared out of the shadows and slung our lunch over his shoulder in a net bag in which he had already an earthenware bottle of water and a package of something, probably *tortillas.* If I was to save my face there was only one thing to do and I did it. I climbed aboard. It was not until the morning, when we got ready for the descent, that I learned I had mounted from the wrong side.

The way out of Santa María for the Agua trail is marked by two tall white pillars embracing the beginning of the road. Our Indian swung ahead on foot, the blade of his

machete protruding from his shirt and glittering in the moonlight that was growing stronger every minute. Halle followed. My horse fell into line; fortunately he knew what was expected of him. If he hadn't I might just as well have started for Honduras. We were on our way, mules or no mules.

And at first it seemed simple enough. The trail was wide and Halle dropped back to talk. It was uphill, so the horses only walked; I was happy about that. Ahead, our Indian plugged along with the mechanical gait that takes these fellows over mountain trails twenty-five miles a day carrying loads that would kill a white man. Occasionally a dog barked at us in a tentative way, but the horses were used to them. I discovered how to sit in the saddle so that the slot in the middle would not pinch too hard, and found time to wonder if the road was going to be as easy as this all the way. It is always curious to observe how quickly circumstances force one to accept them. A horse? Why, of course! Why not? Plainly this was the only way to do it. Already I was a *caballero,* perhaps of Alvarado's time, riding out to conquer. Nonchalantly I lit a cigarette, though without relinquishing my left-handed grip on the front of the saddle. Then abruptly the nice wide trail vanished. There was room for only one horse now. Halle pushed ahead and the trail suddenly grew steeper. My animal slipped on a smooth slab of rock, wrenched himself up and panted hard, and when I looked over the edge there was nothing, only the lights of Antigua twinkling far below—too far below. This wasn't going to be so easy after all.

At about 7500 feet Agua is surrounded by an unexpected belt of heavy, almost jungle growth, just as it was when Stephens and Catherwood made their ascent nearly a hundred years ago. We had bright moonlight now, but the trees and brush were so thick that little of it came through. It became a matter of watching our hats and our faces, shielding ourselves, mostly by guess, from the trailing vines and stubby branches that snatched at us as we plodded forward. Now and again through a brief open space we could look down at Antigua and beyond it another little splash of winking lights that marked the *pueblo* of Chimaltenango. Then the trees would close in again and we would be riding through long black tunnels. The horses continued at a slow walk; on so steep a trail they could do nothing else. As for our Indian, we sensed him ahead rather than saw him excepting when the moonlight flashed for an instant on the bright *machete* blade.

There was an hour of this, and then we emerged suddenly from the wooded belt on to the bare flank of the volcano.

There was still some growth; stunted trees, grass in tall tufts, bushes of some sort and always the vines, looping and winding over everything. But for the most part the trail switched back and forth over sandy ground and a rubble of loose stones. It was much colder and the wind began to catch us, first on one side and then on the other as the trail changed direction. The changes came oftener, too, and the hairpin turns were sharper and steeper. Both horses had to be urged to take the acute-angled scramble up the slope

each time we turned. I wound my neck more tightly in the wool scarf the Señor Logan had lent me and blessed him for thinking of it, cramping and stretching the toes of each foot alternately to keep them from growing numb in the bitter air.

Both of us were beginning to wonder how many more of these switchbacks we had to make, and the horses were stumbling oftener when we came out into a small open place, reasonably level, and stopped for a minute to give the animals a rest. It was not until I dismounted that I understood why the horses had found the going so hard. The trail was solidly crusted with ice. My own heels broke through with every step and I realized that my hands were colder than I had thought. Our Indian *mozo* still had nothing to say; he accepted the cigarette we offered him and smoked it in silence while we rested. From this point we could see even the lights of Guatemala City, our altitude flattening out the range of hills in between. The moon was high now and there was no haze. Over to our right and behind us were the mountains of El Salvador and maybe Honduras. Antigua seemed close enough for us to toss a stone into its public square, though at an immense distance down. Other villages had come into view, minute clusters of lights like minor constellations in the outer darkness. I had never done any mountain climbing before, but I knew what it was like to peer downward from the window of a plane at night and watch the towns flow past. This was more like that than anything else I can think of. My horse coughed asthmatically and our watches said twenty minutes

to three. Perhaps it was better to get going; after all the trip was supposed to take four hours and we did not know how far along we might be.

As a matter of fact, we made the last still sharper climb by half past three. Our Indian stopped ahead of us and held up his hand, but we didn't need him to tell us where we were. To our left the walls of the crater rose in a confusion of broken rock, impossible for a horse to negotiate, but where we had paused there was a curved indentation, an entrance-way to the wide bowl. Here was where the waters had poured out on that fatal midnight of September 10, 1541, to destroy that first brave little capital in the vale of Almolonga and drown Alvarado's widow in her chapel. And here was where we were to clamber down into the crater itself, to sit out the night for the sunrise we had come to see. We looked down into the dead, cold space, coated with glittering frost, and perceived two huts made of reeds and sketchily thatched with clumps of the grass that grew along the high slopes. They looked very small and chilly in the moonlight. It was this climactic moment our Indian guide chose for his first remark of the evening. With a sure sense of drama he swept his arm toward those wretched little shelters. *"El Rancho!"* he said.

We crawled down the tumbled rocks and let him bring along the horses any way he chose.

Near one of the huts, even less homelike on closer inspection, there was a fairly flat rock on which we laid out the provisions. Now was the time for the cognac, and we were glad we had it. Halle fumbled with frozen fingers at the

screw top of the thermos while I kicked industriously at various rocks to get some feeling back into my feet. We gave our Indian a cup of hot coffee and inquired about the possibility of something in the way of a fire. *"Cómo no?"* he said, and went about building one. He could give the Boy Scouts cards and spades and beat them at their own game, that Indian. We did have matches; after all he didn't need to rub two sticks together. But if he had had only one stick and nothing to rub it on, he would still have produced a fire, I believe. We watched him, fascinated, as he coaxed the burning match to light three strands of damp grass, persuaded the grass to ignite five twigs, urged the twigs to start a stick and blew the stick into sufficient incandescence to get a log or two going. It was practically magic, a far-off echo of the time when fire was so precious a man must learn never to lose any of it anywhere.

Neither of us had ever eaten frozen hard-boiled eggs on top of a volcano before, but we did not let that stop us. Nor are cheese and iced meat sandwiches my notion of an appropriate breakfast at nearly four in the morning. But up there in the cold we wolfed it all. The coffee—how wise the Señora Asturias had been to make it sweet!—burned its way down our throats and another dash of cognac afterward completed our restoration. Our Indian had clutched himself into a ball beside the fire and dozed off, always waking, however, just in time to inch the bigger sticks farther into the coals as they burned down. We sat cross-legged like two Buddhas, crouched over that marvelous, extraordinary, magnificent two-bit fire, feeling very much

like Bengal Lancers waiting in Khyber Pass for the hordes of wild horsemen to come thundering down over the sides of the crater in the best Hollywood style. If we waited long enough and didn't freeze in the meantime, morning was bound to come.

Morning, even when you are spending the night in the crater of an extinct volcano, does eventually arrive.

You wouldn't think, maybe, that you could go to sleep sitting tailor-fashion over a smoky fire with your elbows on your knees and your back in a temperature of about ten degrees below freezing. You can, though, as we found out. The last time I had opened an eye and shifted a numb foot as our *mozo* put another stick on the fire, it had been nighttime in spite of the moon. Now it was distinctly lighter. The moon had swung over toward the crater's lip and it was not so bright; another illumination was threatening it. I nudged my companion who said crossly: "Don't shove! I've been awake all the time!" and asked him what his watch said. It was half-past five, and sunrise was scheduled for six o'clock.

When you came down to it, sunrise was what we had come to see. We tottered out of the smoky hut, opened the thermos again, prefacing the coffee with another round of cognac and drinking it while we stood sleepily kicking rocks to get the circulation going again in our toes. Across, at the other side of the crater, our two white horses were cropping the white, frosted grass. Neither looked especially prepossessing now that we could see them plainly, but our Indian,

whose face we really saw for the first time, turned out to have quite a good-natured look about him. We asked him, by way of making conversation, what the horses were called. He said "This one?" pointing to the nearest, and we nodded. *"Blanquito,"* he said. That seemed sensible enough. It was white and it was smallish, and "Little White One" was a good enough name. Then we asked him the name of the other. *"Blanquito,"* he said again. "Both of them?" we asked. Yes, they were both named that. Perhaps we could have pursued the matter further, but it didn't seem worth while.

The sun was almost in sight when we finished our coffee and it was light enough to do some exploring. We walked across the frozen surface of the crater to get some notion of its size. It seemed to be about a hundred yards one way and about eighty or ninety the other. Now, with the light much better, we could see even more plainly how the flood had poured out. The broken edge through which it sluiced is cluttered with rocks, swept there in the rush of the thousands of tons of water that had filled the huge cup and at last burst out under the added weight of the lashing September rains that frightened the people of the Old City for days before the disaster. Just over the edge was the gash that the water had cut, sweeping down some hundreds of yards, then bending slightly to the left. Even this, though, didn't quite explain things. It seemed as though the water ought to have come down almost directly upon Santa María, right below us. Then Halle had the explanation, which is simple though hard to see from above. The answer

is that Santa María is about fifteen hundred feet higher than the Old City. And the pouring water naturally obeyed the proper laws, starting down the mountain in a straight drop, but bearing more and more to the left as it was affected by the tilt of the ground which grows sharper and sharper. Ciudad Vieja just happened to be at the precise point where the descending flood hit the final gentle curve into the valley of Almolonga. And very likely the tragic house of the Doña Beatriz was directly in its path. We thought again of the unhappy lady—that Luckless One—with her maids gathered about her, trusting to prayers in the face of the torrent.

Then the sun was up and we had our lesson in practical geography.

At first there were clouds below and to the east, though they thinned out toward the north. Looking straight at the sun, over the thick banks of cumulus that swirled and floated at perhaps the 7000-foot level we could see mountains that were certainly beyond Guatemala, probably in El Salvador or Honduras. Below was Santa María, a toy town, the church and the plaza clearly discernible, the rest of it a tight little huddle of white dots. Antigua was clearly etched against the green background of trees and fields, and we had the same feeling as on the night before, that it would be no trouble at all to throw a stone—or even ourselves—right into the public square. There was Chimaltenango, still farther to the north, with scattered villages around and beyond it. And between and about every little town there was the constant rise and fall of the peaks and

ridges that form the Guatemalan landscape. Swinging back to the east again we could see Lake Amatitlán and, by using the binoculars, just a corner of the Pacific Ocean. There, in fact, was most of Guatemala spread out before us like the great concrete relief map we had seen in the City. The thing was overpowering, breath-taking. You can see a long way from any high mountain, of course. But from the direct and uncompromising sharpness of a volcanic peak such as Agua's the sweep is almost incredible.

There was, to be sure, the other side of the mountain. To reach it one had to scramble another two hundred feet or so, up over the worst kind of rock and rubble. We debated the matter and finally came to a settlement. My companion would go and look at the other side, at the volcanoes of Fuego and Acatenango, Agua's next-door neighbors, and see if he could note the shadow that Agua is supposed to cast on their flanks early in the morning. For myself, I was willing to believe that the rising sun would put that shadow just where it was supposed to be; indeed, the laws of physics demanded it. Moreover, I was satisfied with the view where I was. I hadn't seen half enough of it. Anyhow, if he saw one side of the mountain and I saw the other, between us we would have seen all of it. So, while he scrambled and panted and damned the sliding stones, I gratefully absorbed the warmth of the new sun, smoked cigarettes and strolled round the crater again, trying to find that rock on which Stephens wrote so long ago that he had seen the chiseled names of a Russian, an Englishman and a certain Joe Croskey from "Fila-

delfye," with the additional information that they had enjoyed several bottles of champagne here together on August 26, 1834. I still hadn't found it when Halle came back to report that the geography of northwestern Guatemala was all in place, and that Agua did indeed throw its dark shadow across those miles of valley, as everybody said it did.

Anyhow, the adventure was over. Our silent Indian was on hand with the two Blanquitos and we were ready to go. We were just making up our minds that we had really been two pretty intrepid explorers when he made his second unsolicited remark of the last eight hours. "Last week," he observed innocently, "Six *señoritas* were here. They enjoyed it very much!" Perhaps he saw the look on our faces, for before we could say anything he added, "They came totally on foot." For the three hours of the descent he said nothing more. After all, he had said enough.

We had a day left in Antigua, and took the morning to view the house which Dr Wilson Popenoe and his wife made famous before her death in 1933.

It is not a public museum, though the government might do well to acquire it some day if Dr Popenoe ever wants to let it go. It is simply an extraordinarily fine reconstruction of an old building, a house that must have belonged to a noble family in the days of Antigua's glory and which Dorothy Popenoe spent her last years restoring to its former magnificence. After her death, Dr Popenoe allowed

tourists to visit it, so that they might see how the great families lived in seventeenth-century colonial Spain. But the tourists wore out their welcome. You may not believe that American visitors would pencil names and dates on the walls of another man's house, perhaps. They did. They even cut their initials in the gleaming wood of the fine old tables and chairs and cabinets that the Popenoes had collected over the years and with which they had furnished the house in the manner appropriate to its period. Tourists tracked in mud, scratched the floors, ordered the servants about, asked if they might buy the furniture, the pots and pans, the pictures off the walls, sometimes growing loud and insistent when they were firmly but politely told that these things were private property. The limit was reached when one group, in Dr Popenoe's absence, bullied a servant into letting them stay overnight, and then drove away in the morning with a carload of the Doctor's priceless antiques. Yes, I know that is hard to believe, but that is the story that was told to us.

For this reason Dr Popenoe has had to close his house to the casual visitor. Most of the time he is in Tela, in Honduras, where he directs the agricultural research work of the United Fruit Company, but occasionally he comes back to Antigua for a holiday. If you are fortunate enough to be in town at such a time, and if you are recommended to him, Dr Popenoe will take you through his house himself. We were fortunate; he was in town. And he guided us through, good-naturedly leaving his own guests to tell us the story of the house.

We saw it all—the great reception hall, the dining *sala,* the high smoky kitchens, the library, even the bedrooms in which are the lovely carved and painted beds of the Spanish Colonial time. From the roof we poked our heads into the dovecotes. Evidently the old owner, whoever he was, had a true fondness for pigeons; there was room here for hundreds of them. Downstairs again Dr Popenoe showed us the ingenious scheme by which water from the *pila*—the washing-fountain in the kitchen-yard—was arranged to run by gravity into the beautiful tiled bath, and also to run out again, down into the old sewers of the town. Splendidly proportioned yet friendly and intimate in feeling, the old house has a charm that takes strong hold of you. It is not hard to imagine the ordered and dignified peace of a life that had its roots in such a place. And Antigua, in the days of the Captains-General, must have been full of such houses; the evidence is still here, on every hand.

In the afternoon we visited the Church and Monastery of San Francisco and sat, later, in the patio of another old house, not so fully restored as the Popenoes' but altogether as charming. It belonged to our friend, Señor Logan: its windows, indeed, are still barred with the carved wooden grilles from which the Popenoes copied theirs, which had been broken or stolen during the years. The sun was low and the patio was delightfully cool as we sipped hot, sweet coffee from tiny cups and looked up at Agua, whose dented crater seemed so close yet so remote. Could we have sat up there and watched today's sun rise? It did not seem possible.

Señor Logan was interested in something else. Volcano climbs were old stuff to him. "So," he said, "you were in the Church of San Francisco. Did you see Hermano Pedro's tomb?" We said yes, we had. We had heard also something about that gentle old priest. Even today, his memory is revered. Devout worshipers pray at his burial-place; we had been told that sometimes, if they are not observed by prying eyes, they even listen at the crack of the lid for Brother Peter to answer them. "Did you know," asked Señor Logan, "that this house is on the street that got its name through Hermano Pedro—the *Calle de los Peregrinos,* the Street of the Pilgrims?" No, we didn't know that. How did it come about? Then Señor Logan, in his slow, quiet speech, told us the story.

Brother Peter was born Pedro de Betancourt, perhaps in Tenerife in the Canary Islands, perhaps (as Dorothy Popenoe notes in her little book about Antigua) in Madrid. There is some good evidence for the latter, although his biographers stick to the Tenerife story. The year, at any rate, was 1626.

He was just twenty-four years old when he made up his mind that he wanted to see the New World. Somehow he made his way to Habana, where he found a ship bound for Guatemala, with cargo for the city of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala, which is now called Antigua. His biographer, Juarros, writes that he was jubilant. "To that City," he said, "I wish to go; for as soon as I heard it mentioned I was filled with an inward joy and great strength, urging me to proceed thither." He got his wish.

The captain took him aboard, and in due course he came to Guatemala and made his way up to the city.

Just what was the compulsion that drove Pedro de Betancourt it is hard to say. He was a simple, innocent sort of youth, but some power was on him. It is said of him that as soon as he came to the small bridge that leads over the tiny river into the capital, he knelt down and kissed the ground. So, at least, his biographer writes, though it is fatally easy, often, for a biographer-after-the-fact to invent early signs of a later saintliness.

Still, there must have been something that compelled the boy to behave as he did. It was a time for mystics, and a spell had hold of Pedro de Betancourt. For as soon as he came into the city, he knew what he must do. He had been sent here to become a priest. Without loss of time he began his studies. This, he was certain of it, was what God wanted of him.

But if that was the case it was unfortunate that some better arrangement had not been made in the matter of young Pedro's ability to learn. It may be that he was an epileptic; certain evidence seems to hint that this might have been the case. Whatever it was, Pedro simply could not remember anything he read. For three years he struggled manfully to learn the Latin prayers, to read the lives of the saints, to prepare and commit to memory the answers to the questions that he must know before he could enter the priesthood. But it was not enough. He could remember none of it. The whole business was a jumble in his head. And at length the strain was too much

for him. In a kind of daze, despairing of ever accomplishing anything, he walked out of the city to which he had looked with such high hopes. He did not know where he was going, scarcely what he was doing. Only at the back of his bewildered mind was a confused hope that perhaps he might be permitted to suffer martyrdom. Even if he could not learn a line of his books, perhaps he might attest in that way to the glory of God.

Wandering in this state of mind, he found himself in the village of Petapa, and because he was weary and sore at heart he turned into the church where he poured out his disappointments and his hopes before an image of the Virgin. And there, miraculously, he was comforted. The Virgin bent down from her pedestal and spoke kindly to him. He was to stop worrying, and return to the city, in which he was destined to accomplish great good. To this day, the people of Petapa venerate that image, which still leans forward to listen.

When he came back to the city, his confessor listened to his story, and Pedro de Betancourt was admitted to the Third Order of the Franciscans. Then he went into solitude, spending many weeks in prayer and fasting, to learn what he should do. And at the end of this time a message was vouchsafed him. He was to care for the sick, the poor and the needy. The great, rich city of Saint James had no hospital. It was to be his task to build one.

To this end Hermano Pedro—Brother Peter as he now called himself—devoted the rest of his life. He bought a poor thatched hut to begin with, carrying to its shelter

on his own shoulders the sick and afflicted poor. As time passed the people began to hear of this man and the good he was doing. Money and clothing for his patients came his way. The hospital grew; so did the school for poor children which he had founded. He had helpers, too; there grew up a society known as the "Congregation of the Bethlehemites," whose members were pledged to follow Hermano Pedro as their leader and to aid him in every way in caring for the sick—even in carrying them on their own shoulders, as their good Brother Peter had done.

Now Hermano Pedro had accomplished his great aim. The sick were cared for. The children of the poor were nursed and clothed and taught in the school he had founded. But Hermano Pedro did not rest. There were souls to be saved as well as bodies. And he took to walking the streets of the city at night, a peaceful, gentle, earnest man, tinkling a small silver bell as a reminder to those who might have forgotten in their worldliness that there was another life after this. All men, to him, were brothers; they were pilgrims, making their way through the world. They had souls, and if they lost them perhaps they might never recover them again. So ran his chant, to the accompaniment of the little bell; in the soft Spanish syllables almost as musical as the sweet silvery chime that Hermano Pedro rang as he called the words: *"Hermanos, hermanos! Peregrinos somos, y por el mundo vamos! Una alma tenemos; y si lo perdemos, no lo recobramos!"*

All this Señor Logan told us, as we sat and listened

while the sun went down. The peak of Agua faded from bright blue to indigo and then to a soft dusky purple, and the smoke from our cigarettes rose straight up in the still, scented air. It is not hard to see why Hermano Pedro, dead at forty because of the hard life he led—or of epilepsy? —came to be called "The Servant of God," nor why today, in the chapel of the Third Order of St Francis, suppliants still kneel and ask aid of the man who never refused anyone.

We walked back through the empty Street of the Pilgrims to the echo of the tinkling bell, saying over to ourselves the words of the little song: "Brothers, brothers! Pilgrims are we, and through the world we go. One soul we have, and if we lose it we will not get it back again. . . . Brothers! Brothers! . . ." It was really too fantastic that we should see, on that short walk, the two shop-signs which, of all we have seen in Latin-American countries, remain with us as uniquely delightful. Perhaps you know how the Spaniard loves to name his little hole-in-the-wall store—*La Victoria, La Libertad, La Violeta, El Polo Norte?* But occasionally some humble genius has a real flight of the imagination, and it must have been the incredible juxtaposition of two such fine minds that produced these signs that were so fitting a conclusion to the quiet twilight hour in which we had been told the story of Hermano Pedro. There they hung, each over its own doorway but, so to say, arm-in-arm, and now joined forever in our minds: The Bakery of the Divine Providence and The Butcher Shop of Peace.

Our last night in Antigua was warm, moonlit and quiet; even quiet for Antigua. It was, that is to say, an ideal night for us to see our first Procession. We were eating our dinner, the late evening meal that Guatemaltecos prefer. The *aguacate* (our avocado, as you may know) had just been served and we were doing our best to squeeze the tart limes on it without popping seeds on to the tablecloth and juice in our eyes, when our barefoot waiter boy rushed in (we had never seen him move so fast) and asked us through the shock of straight black hair falling over his face if we didn't want to see The Procession. His manner of saying it put the capital letters at the beginning of both words, and since avocados don't get cold when left we thought we might. Our boy had already disappeared, but we made our way to the Aurora's corner window to see what was happening.

First, please remember the stillness; Antigua is never noisy but now the streets were completely empty. There was a soft buzzing somewhere, like music maybe, or like many people whispering, yet we could see no one excepting the family in the corner window of a house across the way, a tiny brown child holding the grille and jumping up and down with excitement.

Then there was a small scurrying sound and perhaps twenty or thirty men and boys appeared round the corner, two of them carrying a *marimba*. They were mostly barefoot and they made only the least possible echo of a sound; they didn't talk or laugh at all but set the instrument gently down as the players began, very softly, to hammer out

a tune. It was a simple air, repeated endlessly without variations, in dance time really, though as they played you didn't feel that; it was a subdued, humming overture to what was coming. Nobody swayed to it or tapped a foot; the little group just stood silently in the dim street, waiting. Even the windows and doors that opened all down the dark block made only the faintest noises and there was no conversation, just expectancy in each shadowy frame.

The lights moved into sight far down the street before either of us could tell where they had come from. At one moment there was nothing. Then there was a little cluster of bobbing pin-points of brightness coming irregularly toward us. The music grew louder and there were excited whispers below the window where we stood watching.

As the procession came closer we could see its parts more clearly. There were, first, ten or a dozen women carrying candles. They intended some sort of order; not quite a military company-front but a reasonable degree of alignment. But the cobbled street, sloping from both sides toward the deep central gutter, defeated them. Their line wavered, the candles smoked a little and fluttered even though there was no wind. They were silent, too; their feet made no sound and their shadows came with them along the white fronts of the houses. Behind them were eight more women carrying tall poles at the tops of which were transparencies; candles enclosed in lanterns of red and green paper that threw shifting spots of color against the walls as they passed. With these women, among them and behind them, were more carrying candles, each shielding

the flame with a careful hand. The lights threw faces into relief and by contrast left bodies in darkness. The whole procession might have been walking waist-deep in some silent-running black river.

Then at last came the reason for the procession—the Virgin, borne shoulder-high, still by women, the platform joggling dangerously as the carriers made their way over the stones of the road. Four poles held a cloth canopy over the holy image and there were double rows of candles along the edges of the stand. Sometimes, as the bearers swayed with their burden, the robes of the Virgin swung close to the flames, but miraculously nothing caught fire. We saw the intent, rapt faces of the women as they went by, and then all at once it was over. The *marimberos* stopped playing, and immediately two boys seized the legs of the instrument and were off to get ahead of the procession again. Now for the first time there was the noise of talk among the rag-tag and bobtail that were following the lights and the music up one street and down the next. Two men in trousers, open shirts and black felt hats appeared and began industriously distributing dodgers printed in bright blue. We reached down for one and discovered that it had nothing to do with the procession; the men were simply taking advantage of the crowd that had gathered. What their slips of paper announced was a Royal and Colossal Début of the Nelson Variety Company, headed by no less than Professor Nelson himself, described as a master of *prestidigitación* and *faquirismo*. The début was to take place this same evening at the *Teatro Díaz* in An-

tigua and would comprehend not only the Professor (whose features, unmistakably Afro-American, stared at us from the paper) but such other matters as Bailes Orientales, Tangos Sentimentales and a comedian named Chinchin, who was guaranteed to delight the public with his humorous speeches, jokes, dialogues (presumably carried on with himself) and jesting couplets. As a special attraction there was offered a playlet in two acts, in which the entire company would participate, and entitled *Mujer Sin Corazón*—The Woman Without a Heart. Seats in boxes were twenty-five *centavos,* or if the gentleman was accompanied by a lady twenty *centavos* each. General admission was ten *centavos* only. As an afterthought, apparently, or because there was some more space at the bottom of the sheet, the printer had added the interesting information that the *Teatro Díaz* was an Establishment of Prestige.

We went back to our avocado, our *dulce* and our coffee, happy in the knowledge that there was, here at any rate, sufficient faith for simple people to carry their image through the streets to their church to be blessed, with dignity and assurance and no confusion of mind about this "ism" or that. And it was nice to know (though we would by no means attend) that in spite of the fact that the *Teatro Díaz* was unquestionably infested with fleas, it was still an establishment of prestige; that even if the Oriental Dances and the prestidigitation of the dark Professor Nelson proved a bit dramatic and nerve-racking, there was always Chinchin to relieve the situation with comic speeches, jokes and dialogue, not to mention couplets.

VI

OUR journey up into the Maya-Quiché country—called familiarly *Los Altos,* The Highlands, by all Guatemaltecos—coincided with the appearance of Federico, who became for the ensuing weeks our driver, guide, counselor, Spanish instructor, protector, interpreter and friend.

When you make the trip to the highlands you have the choice of walking like the Indians, riding horseback (in which case you would need a full pack-train for baggage) or going by automobile. There are no trains. Once there was an electric railway between Guatemala City and Quezaltenango but it doesn't run any more; the bridges washed out and so, one gathers, did the financing. But there are roads. They are not paved highways, wide and comfortable like those in the States, or even like Mexico's link of the Pan-American Highway. They are just roads,

built by Indian labor, kept up as well as crews of workers can be expected to keep them with pick and shovel and rock-breaking hammer. Some day they will be broadened and paved, but only as funds are available. President Ubico has the notion (an old-fashioned one, perhaps, to the North American who is so accustomed to buying things and paying for them later) that he prefers to pay as he goes. Therefore if there are ten thousand *quetzales* available in the budget for roads, the government spends nine thousand or thereabouts. That is one of the reasons for Guatemala's solvency, while the road programs of some other countries are public burdens. Only now is Guatemala beginning to buy road machinery—paying cash or coffee for that, too. Still, as has been said, there are roads where there were none a decade ago. And excepting in the worst rains they are negotiable, if dusty. Our arrangement with the Clark Tour people was for a car and a driver who knew the roads, who spoke English, and who had learned enough of his country's history to be able to answer such questions as we might be likely to ask. The tour-manager's answer was that all his guides fitted those specifications; he chose them for precisely those reasons, and gave them a good stiff course in automobile mechanics to boot. Nevertheless, he admitted, some were better than others. He added that he knew the very one for us. He would see that this very paragon of driver-guides called for us at Antigua when we were ready to go, and from then until we returned from the highlands to Guatemala City he and the car would be ours. So Federico came into our lives.

At first it was not apparent that he was anything more than just another driver—polite, sufficiently well informed, expert at tooling the heavy car around the endless curves of the mountain roads. He was dark and square-set and short, a trifle stern of countenance until he smiled. Then his habit of raising his eyebrows and the fact that the right eye-tooth was missing transformed him instantly into a clown. The metamorphosis was startling and we never quite got used to it. I am certain that C. used to work deliberately to make him laugh, just for the shock of that lightning change.

But his smile was not his only virtue. For one thing, we soon discovered that Federico sang. He began by trying us out with a few tentative hummings and then went on to a phrase or two of words and music together. When he found that we had no objection he burst into full-throated melody. Out of the goodness of her heart C. applauded and asked for the name of the song. That was fatal. He wrote us down, then and there, as Music Lovers, and neither of us ever had the courage to disabuse him. Perhaps it might not have been so bad if he had ever sung cheerful songs. Almost anything gay would have done. But Federico's temperament was not of that sort. He specialized in gentle melancholy. Because he was an ardent radio enthusiast—we discovered that he had once tried out on a local amateur night—his knowledge of North American songs was extensive, though his repertoire was distinctly dated. "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" was a favorite, done with a tender tremolo and occasional shuddering jumps into a

vibrant falsetto. Another was "The Moon and I Are Here, But Where Are You?" executed with astonishing slides and swoops in a throaty, gargling style that suggested a crooner suddenly surprised by his voice changing and bravely resolved to pay no attention to the phenomenon. And then of course there were the Mexican songs of which he knew a tremendous number—not the robust ditties such as *"Ranchó Grande"* or even the lilting *"Corriendo y Volando,"* but songs in which the words *amor* and *corazón* were touchingly frequent. Those Federico sang with a special and burning passion, everlastingly and without end, from one end of *Los Altos* to the other. Guatemala's mountains and valleys are unquestionably picturesque, magnificent, glorious. They will always suggest grandeur to us, and majesty. But they will also always remind us of love and aching hearts, and Federico earnestly and unfailingly flatting the high notes.

It was Federico, too, who told us about *apodos.* An *apodo* is a nickname, that's all. But in Guatemala the business of nicknames is no child's play. The Guatemalteco has a sharp sense of humor and the shrewdest of talents for searching out his victim's weakest spot and pinning it down with an *apodo* so devastatingly appropriate that it clings to him forever. You never learn your own; you are left to suspect the worst, and the chances are that your suspicions are justified. Federico's was *Pajarillo*—Little Bird; we heard it from another guide afterward. But that is comparatively mild. Consider, for example, the good spinster lady of a certain age; beginning, to put it mildly, to pass

her prime. The Guatemaltecos had a word for her, six words in fact. She was called *Dos y Media en la Tarde*—Half Past Two in the Afternoon. Yes, *apodos* can be cruel, though they are always funny too; funny to others. We never heard what *apodos* they gave us. Without doubt it was just as well we didn't.

But Federico's greatest talent was his adaptability. When he learned that we wanted to rub up our Spanish he conversed with us wholly in that language, choosing his words with infinite skill so that we would not be staggered by more than one unfamiliar expression in a sentence. He always knew the sights we ought to see and propelled us gently but firmly toward them. Yet if we suggested something completely out of the regulation tourist run, Federico saw to it that we got that too. If he sometimes thought us a bit touched in the head, he never let us see what he was thinking. He helped bargain in the markets—though C. does well enough in any country without assistance—and he explained to dozens of nervous Indians that our camera would not extract their souls from their bodies so that we might later dump them into the crater of the Volcán Santa María, but that we wanted their pictures only because we could not think of returning to our own dull country without some record of their splendid and beautiful costumes. He introduced us to new dishes, steered us away from bad hotels, spun us thumping yarns about pagan altars in mountain caves (some of which may have been true) and entertained us with the highlights of his career. His *novia*—his sweetheart—did not like him to be

a guide, and had periodical jealous fits because the job brought him into constant contact with so many beautiful and young lady *turistas*. We asked him what he did when she cut up rough, and he shrugged and said he went away. She always, he added, recovered.

All this, however, we learned bit by bit, as we came to know Federico better. On his first morning with us he was all formality, superintending the boy who brought out the bags, seeing that they were well stowed in the car, bowing over the hand of the Señora Asturias as she bade us good-bye. We pulled away from the Hotel Aurora in the dazzling morning sun, sorry to leave but glad to know we were returning. Our schedule called for another three days in Antigua, after we came back from the highlands and before we girded our loins for the hop over into the Alta Vera Paz to have a look at coffee. We had wondered about it at the time, but our friend the tour-manager had said: "Of course you may change the schedule. But I think that you will want to see Antigua again. Once is not enough!" How right he was! There is something about Antigua that gets into your bones, and even though we could not define it plainly we were finding it out.

The road to Lake Atitlán begins decently enough, sloping upward over moderate grades through scenery pleasant but not startling. We slipped quietly through Chimaltenango, whose twinkling lights we had spotted on that frozen night up in the crater of Agua. In Chimaltenango there is a fountain whose water, spilled on one side, will run down

to the Atlantic, on the other into the Pacific; but we did not stop to look at it. After all, we could not have pursued the little streams to prove what we had been told, and anyhow there are Continental Divides in our own North America. Nor did we stop in Patzicía, which is no more than a village, different from its neighbors in that the costume may vary slightly but in no other way. Patzúm is not much better; its church is perhaps more lavishly decorated than most—and more oddly, if it comes to that—but we did not wait to enter. The village itself is down at heel; not exactly a dirty place, but not a clean one, either. It suggested, more than anything else (making due allowance for climate and architecture) a small western town that the railroad had passed by. It was just Patzúm; a wide place in the road, indistinguishable from a dozen others more or less like it. However, there is one reason to remember it. It marks just about the last of the easy road on the way to Atitlán.

It is easy to understand why the American tourist, accustomed only to the low hills of the Atlantic Coast or perhaps to the flat motorists' paradise of the Middle West, has occasional fits of nerves on the way to the Lake. Because that road has its moments. Engineers have designed it very well indeed, but there are the *barrancas* to be got round. And unless you have done some real mountain driving in your time, you are likely to find yourself looking back up at the winding road you have just descended and then looking across at the crazy loops of the road you are about to climb and wishing that the whole business were over. Not that

wishing will do you any good. There are always more *barrancas* ahead.

The word, *barranca,* will not be new to you by this time, of course; it means, quite simply, a ravine or canyon. (Here in Guatemala they sometimes say *barranco* too, but we were unable to get any ruling on the distinction, if any.) At any rate, the *barranca* is a Guatemalan specialty. Up in the highlands, in fact, there is very little else. Nine-tenths of the time you are either winding up the side of a *barranca* or down the side of a *barranca.* The rest of the time you are just approaching a *barranca* or just escaping from one. Nor are we unique in noting the quality and quantity of the Guatemalan *barrancas.* They irritated Huxley, half a dozen years ago, and they caused infinite trouble to the Maudslays in 1889 and to Stephens and Catherwood in 1840. Even the great Don Pedro de Alvarado found the *barranca* his bane. Writing to his commander, Cortéz, in 1524, he says—and one may detect very easily the pathos that informed his pen: "This land is very full of gulleys. There are gulleys two hundred fathoms deep, and on account of them one cannot carry on war and punish these people as they deserve." The Indians' punishment, of course, was for the crime of worshiping their own gods, and for being unwilling to turn over all their possessions immediately to the strange white men on horseback. As to whether it was deserved, that may remain a matter of opinion. But when Alvarado wrote "This land is full of gulleys," he was writing only the incontrovertible truth, and from sad experience. We thought of him and of his

troubles as we crawled up and down and then up again to a point to which we could have thrown a baseball half an hour before.

Lake Atitlán is worth it, however.

The road has been winding in and out of the hills, up one and down the next, always gaining altitude. Then suddenly you come round a curve and there is the Lake, perhaps two thousand feet below you, a deep blue excepting where the wind ruffles it to silver, the great volcanoes of Atitlán, San Lucas and San Pedro overlooking it grandly. It is tremendously impressive, but still it isn't the whole Lake that you see. A mile or so farther on your driver turns off down a side road which proceeds for a matter of a hundred feet and then loops back on itself like a driveway. You get out and walk down a little path that comes out on to a small shelf, cut into the side of the mountain. There you get Lake Atitlán—all of it.

Federico stood and watched us catch our breath, as proud as though he had been personally responsible for the Lake. Straight ahead across that incredible blue were the volcanoes of Atitlán and San Lucas. Over more to the right was San Pedro. Between San Pedro and San Lucas there is a little bay on whose shore is the Indian village of Santiago de Atitlán; we couldn't see it from where we stood but it was just around the bend, nestled at the foot of the volcano. Below us, scattered along the lake shore, were other villages which Federico told us were named for the Twelve Apostles. So, later, did everyone else. They tell everybody that; it's one of the stock stories. Then you try to

get somebody to name them and you find that they aren't. There is even a Santa Catarina mixed up with them and a Santa Cruz, neither, quite obviously, an Apostle. Still, there are eight or nine apostolic *pueblos* which should be enough for almost anyone. For that matter, though we found no one who could spot the rest for us, there may be the whole Twelve. Dr Webster McBryde from Tulane University in Louisiana has been up here making a survey of the lake and the surrounding region, and perhaps he knows.

We looked our fill, and Federico told us that the smallish eminence at the foot of San Lucas was called *Cerrito de Oro*—Little Gold Hill—but he didn't know whether this was because gold had ever been found there. Certainly there is no mining now. Then, because we could see he was growing restless, we let ourselves be led back to the car. We were going to see more of the Lake, after all. Our hotel was right on the shore.

We made the drop in low gear, coming down at last through a lovely canyon through which runs—now, in the dry season—a small trickle of water. What it may be like in the rains is something else. For fifty yards on both sides the scattered boulders and sand bear witness that there are times when it is a serious-minded river. There is no bridge; you swish through six inches of water and come up on the other side to find yourself on a wide, shady road that immediately enters the little village of Panajachél. Just beyond the pueblo is the hotel, the only one excepting the tiny Hotel Monterrey, which isn't the kind of thing

for tourists. But the Hotel Tzanjuyú (which means simply Mountain's Nose, or, more roughly, Stony Point) is clean and comfortable enough, a long rambling frame structure with vines and flowers growing all over it and a high, long balcony from which you may look at the Lake as long and as often as you please. The proprietor is Don Ernesto Weymann, a tall, heavy, stooped German in the fifties who smiles at you without ever losing his harrassed look. The Lake has risen more than forty feet in the last seven years, and the Hotel Tzanjuyú has no beach front any more; that is one of his worries. There is also the fact that you can't ever tell about the tourist business, which makes hotel management a highly speculative affair so far away from a city.

Don Ernesto conveyed all this to us in the space between the car and the hotel office where we inscribed our names in his register, carefully filling in the spaces under "Where From" and "Where Bound." It was here that C. for the first time put on record her protest against the universal Latin habit of regarding a wife as just an adjunct. It is always the husband who registers at hotels, who signs passports, who writes on the shabby scraps of paper the soldiers hold up to the car when you come into a town or go out of it. After his name he writes *y esposa*—"and wife." That's enough for any right-thinking Central American official. Of course you take your wife along with you. What else would you do with her? But, having explained her in two brief words, you need to do no more about it. Your chauffeur, of course, must register in full; he is a

man; he has importance. But a wife or a dog or a trunk—those come under the head of general impedimenta. One has them along when one travels, perhaps, but it is sufficient to say so in a sort of footnote. This once, however, C. rebelled. There was a space to be filled in under "Business," and she filled it. After her own name, inscribed in firm black letters, she wrote it out in full: *Administrador General*—general manager. Though he never mentioned it, Don Ernesto worried about that for days; it was one more burden on his already overloaded shoulders. An Indian was bad enough, but who could understand an American?

To get to the villages around Lake Atitlán you must travel by water. Panajachél, right behind the hotel, is the single exception, that is unless you walk or ride a mule uphill and down for miles.

When we arrived we had noticed Don Ernesto's little wharf with various sorts and sizes of motor boats moored by it, and on our first morning we discovered how necessary they were. Still loping about the hotel in his harrassed manner, Don Ernesto found time to put us aboard one of his launches, instruct the pilot and wave good-bye. It was not a tourist day; we had the vessel to ourselves. Now we would really see how big the Lake was and what the Indians were like in some of the *pueblos* around it.

We were well out when our rackety engine coughed once or twice and began to miss. Our Indian boy, perhaps a better mechanic than he looked, fiddled with a button or two and the beat of the exhaust became regular again.

He didn't think we saw him as he crossed himself and continued to watch the engine apprehensively, but we did. We watched it, too, feeling that somehow that might help, but whatever he had done seemed to correct its ailment. The propeller shaft whirred as regularly as a clock, the spray dashed rhythmically from the bluff bows as we caught the little waves whipped up by the wind. The breeze was exhilarating, and we sat with tarpaulins pulled up under our chins, relishing the clear, sharp air. Here for once we were free of dust. Straight ahead the great volcanoes rose out of the lake, the slope down from Atitlán making a suave, perfect curve as it rose again to the peak of San Pedro. In the center of the lowest part of the curve is the entrance to a small bay on the shore of which is Santiago de Atitlán, the most colorful *pueblo* on the Lake. But at the moment we were headed for the village of San Lucas and we bore more to the left—to the southeast, as nearly as we could tell from the sun. Still farther to our left were the villages of Santa Catarina and San Antonio Palopó, the first almost hidden by trees, the latter standing out brightly against the sheer, reddish-brown hills behind it. As in all Indian villages, the church provided a focal point in the center of the town, and on the three sides that were not the waterfront the *milpitas,* the little corn patches of the villagers rose steeply, a light brown against the darker color of the mountain side. Our launch growled along just fast enough to keep the panorama unrolling, an unbelievably picturesque scene in green and red and brown, painted against the turquoise sky and the dazzling white

puffs of cloud that piled up and dissolved again in the wind.

At San Lucas, where the slope of the Volcán de Tolimán plunges directly into the Lake there was a tiny wharf and on it an obliging, stout *ladino* gentleman who gave us a hand up the steep planking that led to shore. We supplied him and our boatman with an American cigarette apiece and left them in earnest conversation while we wandered up the steep street to the town.

The big market of the day was at Santiago, and San Lucas was very quiet. A few women in red-and-white striped *huipiles* were carrying their jars down the slope to fill them at the Lake. Here they did not use the half-walk, half-run so characteristic of the Indian women; the declivity slowed them down to a steady, precise pace that suggested a procession. They were perhaps not too clean, but the bright colors of their *huipiles* and skirts and their upright carriage lent them a surprising dignity. We photographed the old church, scrambling through a small cornfield and up to the top of a wall to do it, and the taking of that picture caused more commotion than the village had seen for weeks. There was one group of women in particular, laughing harder than the rest, but although we doubtless looked odd to them, after all they must have seen tourists before. We—just ourselves—were hardly enough to cause hysterics. C. went over to inquire, but the group broke up instantly, the women fading away in a dozen directions, embarrassed and giggling still. But she kept at it, and eventually she learned the joke. There we were,

two simple-minded foreigners, with no more sense than to go pointing a camera at the old, mossy, tumbledown back of the church when it had a brand-new, shiny plastered and whitewashed front that really looked like something.

If San Lucas was quiet, Santiago de Atitlán was a beehive of activity that began right at the water's edge.

Perhaps it only seemed so that day, but we carried away with us the feeling that the people of Santiago de Atitlán are the nearest to being happy to any we saw in Guatemala. The brilliance of the village costume may have something to do with it. Here the women wear a tightly wrapped bright red skirt and dazzling white *huipil,* but their costume has an even more striking feature. Instead of letting twin braids hang down their backs, they have their own private design for hairdressing—a single braid, into which is woven a five-yard narrow strip of red cloth. The braid is then wound about the head and the surplus yardage carried on, round and round, layer after layer, until it forms a magical halo of scarlet. But their gayety was more than just a matter of costume. The whole shore was dotted with little groups, industriously scrubbing clothes, laughing, calling to each other, the younger ones skylarking, a few older ones busily pulling in the long reeds out of which they weave the Atitlán mats used in this district. Nowhere else did we see women so carefree, so smiling, actually having a good time. These tribes round the Lake, were, to be sure, a hardy and independent lot even as far back as Alvarado's day, and perhaps some of their self-sufficiency has carried over. Whatever the reason, the women of San-

tiago de Atitlán still stand out in our minds. When we think of the Guatemalan highlands we remember them as we do the men of Chichicastenango for their individuality, for some integrity of temperament to which they have held fast, throughout the Conquest and the centuries of enslavement since, and which still makes them people, not merely some more Indians.

On our way back across the Lake we discovered what Atitlán can do when a real breeze comes down from the mountains. The light wind of the early morning had strengthened to a good, stiff blow. Everywhere the Lake was covered with whitecaps and though our engine chugged away without a miss, thanks to our Indian boy's prayers and adjustments, the little launch found it hard going.

We wrapped up completely in our tarpaulins now, throwing them over our heads and peering out through the neck-slit which ordinarily enables them to be used *poncho*-fashion. More than spray was coming aboard, but we tucked our feet up on the seat, braced ourselves and let the fabric shed the water as fast as it came. Our boatman had a *poncho,* too, but he stuck his head through it in correct style and let the handkerchief tied around his head serve as his umbrella. His conversation with his friends in the villages had loosened his tongue, and between waves he pointed out the various other *pueblos* as they came into sight; San Pedro, over at the foot of its volcano far on the other shore; Santa Cruz perched away up on the hill toward Sololá; San Andrés, San Pablo, even a San Jorge

though it had no dragon. The water choked him sometimes, but he kept bravely at it; perhaps he felt he had to show us that his lake wasn't really so bad in spite of a few hundred gallons of water aboard. Once he even sang a verse or two of something that sounded more like German than Spanish and may have been an old Quiché or Tzutuhil war-song for all we know. Then, with a fine wide sweep we negotiated the turn into the little bight where the Hotel Tzanjuyú comes down to quiet water, and tied up again at the home pier. We were damp and fairly blown to bits, but we were back in spite of wind and wave. When we stepped out of our sturdy little launch we felt like feeding it a lump of sugar. It had brought us through.

After lunch we walked the kilometer and a half up the canyon to Panajachél, whose name is said to mean The Place of the Tree-Strangling Vine, no less.

There was a market there and some small activity, and we went into what had once been the *convento* attached to the old church to see what was going on. There are many extremely attractive markets in the villages, but this at Panajachél is not one of them. It is small and given over mostly to foodstuffs; tomatoes, hulled corn, the tiny potatoes that are all they can grow in Guatemala, leeks, onions, black beans (the delicious *frijoles negros* of Guatemala that are better than any other beans anywhere) bananas, oranges, limes and many other less familiar vegetables and fruits. Best of them all—and one of the cheapest—is the *granadilla,* the fruit of the passion-vine, which you eat by

slicing off the top and scooping out the pulp and the seeds. Because of its hard shell, it is one of the fruits that the foreigner can eat with safety, and we bought four for one *centavo* and wandered over to the little park opposite the market entrance to eat them.

The village costume of Panajachél runs to red and blue, the women wearing a red *huipil,* not much decorated, and a wrap-around blue skirt fastened with a sash. Most of the sashes were white; rather, they had been, Panajachél not being an especially clean *pueblo.* There was a sprinkling of Indians from the hills but not many; on a Sunday there were far better markets in other villages. One small procession, however, startled us; father, mother, a boy of twelve or so, and a girl that could have been no more than nine, all carrying rough lumber sawn in planks two inches thick, about fifteen or sixteen inches wide and all of eight feet long. Father had three, mother and son carried two, slung from the *mecapal* or tump-line across the forehead and braced across the shoulders. The tiny girl had one, and it was almost too much for her; she trotted past us breathing hard, her small face screwed into a knot of effort. To be sure, all these Indians carry tremendous loads; beasts of burden are scarce and all through the hills man-power is the answer. But never before or since did we see so small a child with so large a load. Even the people of the village stopped and looked after the little parade as it turned up the steep hill on the road to Sololá.

Back at the hotel, we sat on the broad balcony under the galvanized-iron eaves (what would the Central American

Republics do without galvanized iron?) and watched the sun set over the Lake, the banked clouds reflecting the light in violent reds and oranges and pinks that faded to a deep blue and then to a heavy purple as the volcanoes grew darker and at last black. We thought of what Mrs Maudslay had written forty-five years ago when she and her husband first saw Atitlán: "It is a poor simile, but I can compare this to nothing but the falling and rising gauzes of a Christmas transformation scene, with a wealth of color and effect that Covent Garden may despair of ever attaining." It is a poor simile, but you are at liberty to find a better one. No wonder one of the three great Indian nations, the Tzutuhiles, chose the far shores of the Lake as their stronghold in the days before the Spaniard came. Who could possibly conquer a race of men sheltered and protected by the majesty of these peaks?

Below us in the courtyard there was a mild chattering and we looked down. Two merchants we had seen in Panajachél had walked over to the hotel to see if they couldn't drum up a bit of last-minute business. All the hotel maids were out examining the stock—the cheap prints and calicoes, the cotton stockings in fawn-color and the grayish pink so beloved of the *ladino* women who are anxious to parade their difference from the Indian by wearing something on their legs and feet. The peddlers were *ladinos* too; one a silent partner who sat immovable in white pajamas, a red neckerchief, straw *sombrero* and sandals; the other voluble, in sandals also but wearing a pair of bell-bottomed black trousers bound round the waist with a scarlet sash,

THE CHURCH AT CHICHICASTENANGO IN THE HIGH-LANDS, KEPT DAZZLINGLY WHITE BY ZEALOUS WORSHIPERS.

AT THE OPPOSITE END OF THE PLAZA, THE CALVARIO MATCHES THE CHURCH IN ITS SIMPLE LINES.

THE MEN BUY HOUSEHOLD GOODS IN CHICHICASTENANGO.

SOME INDIAN BLOOD, BUT MORE SPANISH. BOYS AND GIRLS DRESS LIKE THEIR PARENTS IN MINIATURE.

THE VILLAGE STREET DROPS OUT OF TOWN THROUGH
THIS BADLY MODERNIZED ARCHWAY.

AN INDIAN HOUSEWIFE PREPARES HER THREAD FOR WEAVING.

SHE CARRIES HER LOOM WITH HER AND SETS IT UP ANYWHERE BY TYING ONE END TO A POST.

MEN WEAVE THE BRILLIANTLY COLORED HEADBANDS
ON THESE RAPID FOOT-POWER LOOMS.

IN THE HILL COUNTRY THEY STILL USE GOURDS TO GIVE THE NOTES OF THE MARIMBA RESONANCE.

ONE OF CHICHICASTENANGO'S FOREMOST CITIZENS,
DIEGO YGNACIO, FARMER AND MERCHANT.

MAN OF NAHUALÁ, WHOSE CHECKED KILT RESEMBLES THAT OF THE SOLOLÁ MEN, THOUGH HIS COAT IS DIFFERENT.

ONE ROCKET ON ITS WAY, ANOTHER JUST STARTING. ON THE STEPS OF CHICHICASTENANGO'S CHURCH AT FIESTA-TIME.

TZICOLÁJ, IMAGE OF A LITTLE MAN ON HORSEBACK, RIDES UP AND DOWN HIS ROPE ON THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

RELIGIOUS CONFRATERNITIES BRING THEIR SAINTS IN PROCESSION TO BE BLESSED IN THE CHURCH.

CHICHICASTENANGO INDIAN FAMILY OF THE BETTER CLASS, HARD-WORKING AND SELF-RESPECTING.

ONCE A GREAT TEMPLE, THIS RUIN AT SANTA CRUZ QUICHÉ IS ALL THAT REMAINS OF A MAYAN CENTER OF WORSHIP.

and a snap-brim felt hat two sizes too small, tilted at exactly that rakish angle that only the Latin-American seems to get. In the twilight the maids held up the lengths of cotton cloth, bright reds and pinks and blues, some of them looking a little like the native Indian weaves but all manufactured in Guatemala's new mills. There was a great deal of comment and thumbing of the materials and head-shaking, but even when the merchant brought out his valiseful of buttons, beads and brooches nobody bought. Once there was a breathless moment when he held up his prize item—a pair of swimming trunks, bright yellow with a white ribbed belt. They were plainly made for a ten-year-old child, though each maid held them up before her and exclaimed over the tight, well-knitted fabric. But there was still no sale, and that last effort rang down the curtain. The maids went back to the kitchen. The merchants packed up everything very carefully in two large bundles, hoisted them to their shoulders and padded softly away. The few ragged Indians that had stood about watching drifted off, their *machetes* flashing in the last of the sun. There was a faint, pungent smell of smoke in the air; the wind had died down and one large star made a bright path across the Lake.

VII

THE whole village trembled to the vibration of the drum.

Somewhere out across the valley a short brown man was sitting with opaque eyes, tapping out the ancient syncopated beat on the head of a tall cylinder held between his knees. He had been drumming all day. He would be drumming all night, he or another. The notes would go on, rolling through the hills, humming in the clear mountain air, echoing from the peaks, reverberating down the *barrancas.* There was no way of knowing when the drum would stop, whether it would ever stop. Sometimes there would be a false syncopation, a beat missed. But it always caught up, just as it faltered for a time yet caught itself up and went on again four centuries ago when a red-haired Spaniard came riding over the mountains from Mexico to stop it. Alvarado and his Tlaxcalan allies were good at

slaughter, but they did not stop the drum nor the drummers. They had sounded their ceremonial notes too long. Nor has the present overflow of progress into the Guatemalan highland villages muted that steady thudding. In the plaza of Chichicastenango the good Church Indians carry their saints to be blessed, shuffle in procession to the thin melodies of the *marimba,* genuflect, kneel and pray. But out in the hills, refusing the benediction, a postscript to the prayer, there is always the pulse-beat of the drum, the dark Mayan rhythm that never ends.

The little wind flowing down from the mountain brought with it a wild, aromatic odor that spiced the room where I sat. There was a drum between my knees too, standing firmly on end, tablewise, not tilted for drumming. On the hillside, beyond the blue haze that swam over the valley, the pulse of the drum throbbed strongly. In my room I tapped antiphonally in a more modern measure. The typewriter on my drum-head was busy; its tiny, metallic arms flew up and down in a hurry, making a great clatter. But it had to rattle so many times to say even a little. The resonant drums on the hillside were saying everything, over and over again, as they had for a thousand years.

When the Maudslays wrote their classic, now very rare book about Guatemala in the nineties, they did not like Chichicastenango. They noted severely: "It is a brown, dusty-looking place, lacking even the relief to the eye one might expect from the presence of the *chichicaste* or tree-nettle from which the town takes its name."

It is not at all like that today. Now it is an exceptionally clean, well whitewashed village, its streets crooked but tidy, its church and *calvario* dazzling in white plaster. Its full name is Santo Tomás Chichicastenango, wherefore its inhabitants are known as Maxeños, the word deriving from the last syllable of their saint's name. It is Guatemala's latest tourist-town, accessible by fairly good roads, noted for its priest, Father Ildefonso Rossbach, and for the Mayan Inn, which unexpectedly turns out to be the best hotel in the entire Republic. Father Rossbach has an extraordinary collection of jadeite relics, brought him by his Indian parishioners over the years. The Mayan Inn boasts the most modern comforts; it is really a luxury hotel, at least for its part of the world. The tourist goes to Chichicastenango to see the relics and the Indians and enjoy the honest comforts of the Inn. And if he happens, as we did, to come during the week before Christmas, he will discover something in the line of *fiesta* that eclipses anything he has ever seen before.

We had arrived at sundown, dusty and tired from the roller-coaster drive up from Lake Atitlán.

The road is not remarkable for villages. There are one or two, notably Sololá, from whose market-place you get a magnificent panoramic survey of Lake Atitlán and the volcanoes standing knee-deep in its blue water. We stopped long enough to satisfy Federico, who took his duties seriously, but there was no market at Sololá on Monday and the plaza was empty. There was the *Intendencia* over at one side of the square, but we saw no reason why we

should call on the mayor. Opposite it was a church, very much like other churches, and beyond it the basketball court without which no Guatemalan town seems complete. The redoubtable Mr Naismith, when he invented basketball, could hardly have foreseen the popularity of his idea in Latin-America. The strange thing, however, is that it seems to remain no more than an idea. No village is complete without its gaunt pair of weatherbeaten standards with their rusty iron rings. Yet you never see anybody playing the game. Basketball in Guatemala, as far as we were able to determine, is well liked but only in the abstract; "pure basketball," so to put it, in the sense of pure poetry.

At Sololá you are something like 7000 feet above sea-level. Before you reach Chichicastenango you drop to 5000, rise to 10,000 and come on down to 7000 again. Most of it is *barranca* country, but you are getting used to that by this time. You pass through Los Encuentros, where you may turn off for Quezaltenango if you happen to be going that way. For the rest, there is hardly anything but the strange rich plant life, unfamiliar red and purple and yellow blossoms, orchids sprouting from the trees and the ochre earth that marks volcanic country. Federico wrestled with the wheel, alternately sang aloud and hummed softly to himself, vouchsafed an occasional explanatory remark when there was anything to explain, and we narrowly missed chickens, mules, Indians, and now and again a herd of scraggly sheep. You might think that at 10,000 feet your highway would traverse unoccupied country. Not a bit of it. The moment you are positive that you are out in the

Great Alone, communing only with Nature and the purr of your car's exhaust, you round a bend and almost slaughter nine Indians with loads of pottery, firewood and cornhusks. You are quite sure there can be no living soul within miles, and then an Indian boy pops his head round a bush to see what all the noise is about. The answer, of course, is that there are some 1,600,000 Indians in this country and practically none of them live within commuting distance of Guatemala City, but right out here in the hills. Most of the villages, even—and they are widely scattered—do not run to more than 3000 inhabitants. The Indian lives not only off the country but in it, just as far out in it as he can get. He is, by habit and inclination, a small farmer. He has his little patch of corn and his pig or two, maybe a mule, his chickens or turkeys and occasionally a horse; and he is as much at home at 12,000 feet as he is at 5000. Wherefore our road was not a lonesome one. In the mountains of Guatemala a driver doesn't worry much about other cars coming round the bend, but he must be on the alert every second for the unexpected Indian, his chickens, his dogs or his wife.

Federico was alert. When there was any doubt about a hairpin turn he held down the horn-button all the way round it. And when we actually came into Chichicastenango he religiously honked at all corners. Indeed, our mournful bellowing must have announced us to the Mayan Inn blocks before we got there. When we turned in through the gates with a final appealing moo there were at least six boys ready to take our bags and two beseeching us to

get our shoes shined. Behind them was Don Hans Rohrmann, chunky and cheerful, to tell us our room was ready.

The Mayan Inn and Clark's Tours are one and indivisible. If it were not for the fact that in this Place of Tree-Nettles there is a comfortable hotel the tourist would not come here, in spite of the fact that there is much worth seeing. On the other hand, if it were not for the carefully organized tourist-car service there wouldn't be any way for the tourist to get up to Chichicastenango in comfort, and if the tourist didn't come to the Inn, practically nobody else would, excepting the occasional visitor from the City, up for the Christmas or Easter *fiesta,* or perhaps on his honeymoon. One, then, depends on the other and the other on the one.

Don Alfredo Clark, an American, was responsible for both. We never met him; he died in the United States while we were visiting his Inn. But the Inn and the Tours have placed his mark on Guatemala. Naturally the whole affair is a commercial enterprise, but Don Alfredo made it more than that. If the credit for opening up picturesque Guatemala by building roads is to go to the present government—as it must—then the credit for helping the tourist to see in comfort the places to which those roads take him goes to Alfredo Clark.

Don Alfredo came to Guatemala in the early 1920's. His auto-supply business expanded and pretty soon he found himself managing a fleet of taxicabs. He was firmly established in a country that was just about to become one of the places tourists go.

The roads had to come first, of course, and President Ubico's program took care of that. With drivable highways it was possible to show the visitor something beside the capital city and the ports. So the steamship companies began to take advantage of the situation and made Guatemala a regular stop on their luxury-cruise schedules, east coast and west coast too. Obviously when this happened somebody had to take care of riding the tourists around, and that was where Clark's tours came in.

At first, the Clark organization had to rely on outside help when they brought visitors to Chichicastenango.

People wanted to see the town because, for the most part, the Indians there stuck very closely to the old ways. Descended from the old Quiché stock, the Indians of Chichicastenango still preserve most of their ancient customs; even though Father Rossbach has been long established, his parishioners hold fast to their old religious rites, mixing them with proper Church ritual according to their own ideas. That makes for picturesqueness, and tourists are by definition people in search of the picturesque. Chichicastenango, therefore, was an ideal place to bring the traveler and Don Alfredo saw that.

But when it came to accommodations, it was something else. For a time, with the cooperation of Father Rossbach, the visitor was allowed to sleep in the big room, attached to the church, where the Rossbach collection of Mayan antiquities is housed. The Clark organization brought up food and mattresses, even bridge tables sometimes, so that the tourist wouldn't feel too far from civilization. At least

there was a certain kind of thrill for some kinds of tourists in dealing cards where the Mayan chieftains dealt in lives. It wasn't perfect, but it would do.

However, the tourist business kept expanding. People came and saw and fell in love with Guatemala's highland country. They told their friends. They wrote books. The roads were improved, stretching farther and farther into the remote mountain country. Clearly something more had to be done. And in 1932, Don Alfredo cast his die. He bought an old house in Chichicastenango and remodeled it into a small hotel. His friends laughed at him. It wouldn't work, they said; nobody would go near the place. But Don Alfredo knew the tourist better than his friends did. Chichicastenango was perhaps the most colorful town in the Republic. And tourists want color. That's what they tour for. Don Alfredo went ahead.

Today's Mayan Inn proves he was right.

From the original four-room house on the crest of a little hill, the Inn has grown steadily until now it is a good-sized hotel. It moved, first, down the hill beside it; one after another, new rooms were added, with their own patios and terraces stepped down the slope. The garage was built on the upper level; new kitchens and dining-rooms grew on to the plan. In 1936 an annex was built across the street; even more modern in its appointments, it is perhaps the finest part of the whole delightful scheme.

And now the visitor can be more comfortable in Chichicastenango than in any other place in Guatemala. Because it is cool up in the hills at night, all the rooms in the Mayan

Inn have fireplaces, and you have to experience the mountain cold in this country to know how welcome a heated bedroom can be. Don Hans Rohrmann, the manager, has his boys trained to a fine edge and there are dozens of them; you get a fire laid and lit in three minutes any time you want it, hot-water bottles in your bed and drinking water that is both boiled and filtered. Those may sound like simple matters to you. In Central America they are the next thing to miracles.

As for the food (American style and excellent) and the library (for which Don Alfredo robbed his own shelves to bring together books, in English and Spanish, about Guatemala) and the furniture (which is old Spanish Colonial stuff, gathered from every corner of the country) it is enough to say that all these are unique in Guatemala.

Do I seem to lay it on too thick? Wait. Wait until you have slept on some of the reinforced concrete pillows, in the mouldy rooms of some of the other hotels of the country. Wait until you have made the sad discovery that other hotel taps marked *Caliente* emit only tepid water at best and not much of that. Wait until you have frozen in icy patios, designed for temperatures they only see for two months out of the twelve, sitting there because there is nowhere else to go excepting your bedroom which is colder still. Wait, too, until you have eaten some of the flat, unsavory messes that so many hotels in this country fondly believe to be American food. You will know then what obstacles Don Alfredo Clark overcame to create this kind

of hotel in a small village up in the mountains of a country that has entirely different notions about hotels. And you will understand our enthusiasm and applaud it.

Father Rossbach is one of the attractions of Chichicastenango, indiscriminately lauded, written up by dozens of visiting authors, an institution in the town. Everybody goes to see him, to admire his extraordinary collection of ancient Mayan relics and listen to his special lecture that he has worked out very shrewdly for the American ear—a dab of archæology, a pinch of history, a sly reference to the sex life of the Maya, a bit of mysticism for flavoring and an oblique (but nevertheless plain enough) hint that something be dropped in the collection-box as you go out. We went along with a tourist group on our first day, hung about on the fringe and listened, and then decided that we would call on him just by ourselves. The man is an actor as well as a priest, and you don't get at the inwardness of an actor by watching him only in his rôle.

We found him sitting in his room in the old *convento* which is part of the church of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango. The red brick floor was spread with fragrant pine-needles, the room was filled with comfortable chairs and lined with books; it had a cool and pleasantly musty air, like all interiors in houses cut off from the outside sun by the thick walls of masonry in which the Spaniards specialized. Over at his desk beside the single window, Father Rossbach was talking rapidly to a diminutive Indian. The small brown man stood with his hat in his other hand,

nodding very seriously as he listened to the *padre's* flow of Spanish. Only when he was dismissed with a pat on the head and a gentle poke in the ribs did his solemn countenance relax; he was grinning like a twelve-year-old urchin as he trotted out. Not so many people, even here, understand the Indian's childlike nature, his child's solemnity and his child's capacity for being amused by simple things. Father Rossbach does, and the fact that he does is probably one of the reasons for his long success in Chichicastenango.

The Indian of these highlands—and especially of this particular place—is a very special sort of individual. He is, as has been said, excessively childlike in many ways. But he is also excessively proud. For four centuries he has been in contact with a civilization and a religion derived from Europe, and he has absorbed, within his limits to receive, a great deal of both. The very costume of the Chichicastenango man, woven of black wool and embroidered in yellow, red and purple according to his rank, is really an adaptation of the 17th-century Spanish jacket and knee-breeches.

But the point is that it is an adaptation. And it is the same way with the Christianization of the Indian. These people are good church-goers, none better. The Church of Santo Tomás is not an edifice to be warmed by human presence once a week and left chilly the other six days. It is a part of the village life, busy all the time, scented with the *copal*-smoke of a hundred swinging censers a day, filled with the twinkling candles and scattered rose-petals of petitioning Indians from morning until night. But their

very prayers are adaptations. Their ceremonial, much of which is carried on without any need of a priest's assistance, is an adaptation. Your Indian, in this place at least, has simply built his Catholic faith into the structure of his other, older life and belief. Now it is like nothing else anywhere on earth. The drums are a part of his worshiping, not just an obstinate holdover from the past. A ceremonial is a ceremonial; a ritual is a ritual; both are things to be performed for their own sakes. And if the church rites, as they were brought to the Indian from outside, may be enriched and given color by being blended with his own ancient ceremonies, so much the better. He sees no reason why not.

Father Rossbach's understanding of this is what has given him the hold he has had on the Indians of Chichicastenango—in fact on the 33,000 Indians throughout the surrounding hills who come under his wing. Another man, perhaps, would feel wretched about the "heathenish" insistence of the Indian upon retaining his drum and his fife. Many a priest would be troubled by his failure to persuade the Indian that his privately conducted rites with flower petals, libations of *aguardiente* and incense swinging in his own personal censer were not proper symbols of the faith he professes. But Father Rossbach knows that the Indian is far from being a heathen. If these strange ceremonials have become part of the Indian's Christianity as he sees it, then his strict observance of them is all the more proof that he is truly Christian and a good Catholic according to his lights. And because he is a wise priest, he is more con-

cerned with what the Indian means by what he does than with the details of his manner of prayer.

So much Father Rossbach explained to us as we sat and talked to him in his study while clusters of Indians waited outside, sitting patiently until he might be through his business with the two tiresome foreigners. His little sharp eyes twinkled, his black skull-cap sat on his white hair, sometimes sliding a little as his vehement speech led him to nod his head vigorously as he made a point. There is plenty of the actor in Father Rossbach; he knows all the tricks of the actor's trade. His voice rose and fell; his speech switched from English to German to Spanish, as he told us how he had come to Guatemala forty years ago to be a clerk on a coffee-*finca;* how he had learned something of the Indians and decided, though a Protestant, that he would be a priest; how he had gone to the United States and studied in a New England school for the priesthood; how he had returned after being ordained and taken up his duties here in the hills. He is proud of his Indians—a little proud, too, of his influence with them—and he wanted us to realize that his Indians were good Indians, and that although they had to be reached by taking advantage of their fondness for colorful magic, they are being reached effectively for the good of their immortal souls. And we could not doubt it. The clouds of aromatic smoke that rise day and night from the steps of the Church of Santo Tomás, the sonorous, chanting prayers that fill this church, are evidence enough.

Afterward we walked with Father Rossbach through

his museum, in which, during a quarter of a century, he has brought together a remarkably fine collection of artifacts found by the Indians in the old Mayan ruins—pottery, jade ornaments, small stone figurines, large clay images, every kind of object you can imagine. We had already heard of the two plates of thin beaten gold that are the prize items of his whole collection; they are of old Peruvian manufacture without doubt, as archæologists have agreed. Father Rossbach, and some who have written about him and his museum, seem to think that those fragile golden leaves prove the existence of a direct trade route all the way down to Cuzco in Peru. But that seems a trifle farfetched. They may have been traded a dozen, a hundred times before they found their way this far north. Or they may have been brought in by some pilgrim who made the enormously arduous journey for reasons of his own. We did not argue the matter. After all, it is Father Rossbach's collection, even though the government has clamped down on it and will not permit him to sell it out of the country. It was that fact, which disturbs him greatly, that gave us another view of Father Rossbach. While we were looking through the museum, another tourist group had come in, and the *padre* went swiftly into his act. He was not the same man who had been talking to us. Now he wore the mask of the entertainer, the after-dinner speaker. The wrinkles in his countenance were smiling and his words were soft, but his eyes were sharp, missing nothing. He knew his audience well and he understood perfectly how to play on its emotions. We had heard the speech be-

fore, but we listened fascinated to the virtuoso at his instrument, to the quick swing from fact to fancy, the interplay of humor and information, the clever appeal to the indulgent American mind to make allowance for the speaker's little weakness as he took a pinch of snuff. ("You are broad-minded people, *hein*?" with just the suspicion of a wink.) And his peroration was masterly. Here was this collection, a wonderful thing, brought to him piece by piece by his people. (Was there something familiar about the word, "peepul!"—something that reminded us of election-time at home?) But the museum took keeping up. The relics had to be watched, arranged, catalogued, kept in order. He could not sell any of it; it was his, but the government would not allow him to do as he pleased with his own. And his people were so poor. So poor. Good children, but they had nothing. Yes, yes, it was a shame. His voice was confidential now; he was the good old man, pleading for his Indians. And because they were poor, and the church was theirs, their very own, it was customary—he did not like to mention it—for visitors to give a little something, anything at all, whatever they wished, as they went out the door. There was a box handy. We would understand. Yes, surely we would understand the need, the poverty, the faith that asked nothing but believed that God would provide.

I am quite sure that all of us felt more than a little godlike as we provided, in the handy box, conveniently close as we went out. We had heard it before, but it was nevertheless a good piece of work, that speech. As C. whispered

to me on the way toward the door, the show was really worth the money. I dropped a piece of silver through the slot as we passed, and its clack on the wooden bottom of the container drew Father Rossbach's eye to us, needle-sharp, penetrating my pocket and the box. We learned next day that the good *padre,* like Aimee Semple McPherson, preferred the quiet, dignified whisper of paper money.

We saw Father Rossbach only once again. That was when we had observed three funerals, one after the other in the market-place. Death is always close at hand in these countries, and funerals, like weddings, are so much a part of living that their observance is more or less a public matter in which everyone is interested. What had puzzled us was that two of the funeral processions had gone only as far as the steps of the church, whereon several old men had lifted silver crosses, made what was obviously a ritual speech in the Quiché tongue, swung incense-pots, rang a little bell and prayed after their own fashion without a priest of any sort. But the third had gone into the church while a fife and drum made their melancholy music outside the door. Why? Was this dead man more important? Were there grades in funeral ceremonies as in other matters? We called on Father Rossbach especially to ask him. What he said was, "Oh, yes, yes. They came into the church, yes. Some of them do. They want me to conduct the service for them. But they pay me so little! Twenty cents, only; would you believe it?" We believed it. Had not Father Rossbach himself told us how poor his Indians were? But I am afraid we left his study rather abruptly. Somehow every-

thing there, as in the world, came round in the end to talk of hard cash.

Chichicastenango's big *fiesta* of the year is December 22, the day of the town's patron, Saint Thomas. Since it was so close to Christmas, the doings were doubly exciting; every Indian in the hills round about dropped all business and came into the village to sell or buy, to worship, listen to the music, dance and, of course, drink.

It is in this matter of drinking that you will see most plainly the difference between the Indian here and the *peón* in Mexico; indeed, the way drink affects them gives you the whole clue to the temperament of these descendants of the Maya.

Your Mexican peon gets drunk fast, to be sure. He doesn't know much about when to stop pouring down his *pulque* or his *tequila* or his *mescal* or his brandy. But at least, somewhere along the line, before he has had his one over the eight, he enjoys himself. The Mexican, after a drink or two, sparkles. He wants to sing, to dance, to play the guitar. He loves the whole world and everybody must share in his affection. To be sure, he passes quickly to the point where he wants to fight, but he has had a good time first.

The Indian of Guatemala, however, never really enjoys his drinking. One or two glasses of the fiery *aguardiente* and he becomes introspective. Another two or three and he grows sad, often maudlin. The next thing you know, he is staggering and shouting harsh curses in a guttural, animal-

like monotone. Then he is ready to be taken home. Sometimes he dances, but even that dancing is a sad affair, a solitary shuffling done all alone with the hands clasped behind and the eyes fixed on the floor as he goes round and round in his own little circle. There is no good time about it. Only the *ladino* storekeeper, who has laid in an extra supply of potables for the *fiesta,* is happy. He has made his profit.

This business of the lower-class *ladino* liquor-seller cynically filling his pockets at the expense of the wretched Indian is nothing new either. Reading old Thomas Gage's "New Survey of the West Indies," written almost exactly three hundred years ago, we were struck by the aptness with which his description of that same situation fits the picture today. Here is how Gage tells the story in the old-fashioned but direct and simple English of the 17th century:

"Now the Spaniards, knowing this inclination of the Indians unto drunkenness, do herein much abuse and wrong them; though true it is there is a strict order, even to the forfeiting of the wine of any one who shall presume to sell it in a Town of Indians, with a money mulct besides. Yet for all this, the baser and poorer sort of Spaniards, for their lucre and gain contemning authority, will go out to the Towns of Indians about, and carry such wine to sell and inebriate the Indians as may be very advantageous to themselves; for of one Jar of wine they will make two at least, confectioning it with honey and water and other drugs which are cheap to them and strongly operative

upon the poor and weak Indian heads, and this they will sell for good Spanish wine, with such pint and quart measures as never were allowed by Justice Order but by themselves invented. With such wine they soon intoxicate the poor Indians, and when they have made them drunk, then they will cheat them more, making them pay double for their quart measure; and when they see they can drink no more, then they will cause them to lie down and sleep, and in the meanwhile will pick their pockets. This is a common sin among those Spaniards of Guatemala, and much practised in the City upon the Indians when they come thither to buy and sell. Those that keep the *Bodegones* (so are called the houses that sell wine) will commonly entice in the Indians, and make them drunk, and then pick their pockets and turn them out of doors with blows and stripes if they will not fairly depart."

Every word of that might have been written of today's *cantina*-keepers and today's Indian. Friar Gage, too, might be interested in knowing some of the newer refinements of the pocket-picking art. Nowadays the favorite trick is to permit the Indian to leave his coat or blanket in pawn for the last drink or two he doesn't need. Then, when the chastened and headachy customer comes to get it back, he is charged interest on the "loan," as much as the traffic will bear, usually fifty per cent or more. We did not learn whether there was still any law on the books about liquor-selling to the Indians; if there is, it is winked at, even laughed at. Business, in Guatemala, is business; and the government collects a fat tax on every drop of liquor sold.

Still, there is more to *fiesta*-time than drunkenness. There are the religious ceremonies, there is the special market, many times as large as the usual weekly one. There are the sky-rockets and bombs, without which no ritual of any kind is complete. And of them all, the market is the most important. There the Indian from the hills buys and sells and meets his friend. There he sleeps and there he eats—by all means eats. Indeed, the first sign that a really big market is getting under way is the sprouting of the temporary shacks devoted to nourishment.

The rule here, apparently, is that two sides of the plaza shall be set aside for the food booths which are laid out in a double row on each side. Overhead arrangements are sketchy; four stout poles, half a dozen thinner ones for rafters and a few square yards of dry grass make the average restaurant. Sometimes canes are set in the ground to make walls on three sides, and once in a while some madly extravagant enthusiast goes to the trouble of building walls all round and constructing a rude doorway. But for the most part the shacks are no more than shelters from the sun. The cooking is done outside, where the client may see and smell as well as eat.

The stove in front of each booth measures about seven feet by four and it is raised some eighteen inches from the ground. It is made very simply by laying out a rectangle of thick adobe slabs, superimposing another layer on these and then covering the whole top with a solid coating of smooth clay. By the time this dries and has had a charcoal fire or two built on its surface, it is as good a stove as any-

one needs. Great pots of stew simmer on these all day, gaining flavor from the pungent smoke that always whirls around and above them, always hot and ready to ladle out for the next hungry customer. What goes into these stews only the Indian cook herself knows—bits of chicken and turkey, handfuls of the tiny potatoes that grow here, bunches of herbs and *chile,* rancid fat, chunks of beef, *frijoles,* stray kernels of corn, anything else that is handy. But they do smell extraordinarily good. If we hadn't seen the brownish water dipped out of the plaza fountain, and if we hadn't noted the way the flies crawled on the meat in the butcher-shop we might have been tempted to try a dish. As for coffee, the restaurateurs roast and grind it as they go; we watched several of them stirring the burning beans (the Indians like their coffee roasted to a crisp) and later grinding them on the same stone *metates* they use for their corn.

After the question of eating was taken care of, the rest of the booths began to go up. We wondered about places; who got the favored locations and why? Were there ever any arguments about it? We were told that, like everything else in the Indian villages, it all goes by *costumbre*—custom. The family or individual that has had a certain spot for years simply retains it. No one questions their right; it is a custom and that is all that's necessary as far as any Indian is concerned. So the booths proceeded to rise like magic out of the brown dust of the square. By afternoon the whole thing was laid out in narrow alleys. Pots and potters occupied one corner, their exhibits wandering off

down one of the side streets. The vendors of sisal nets, ropes and bags had the corner opposite; they too overflowed and the next block was lined with their wares. In the square proper were the dry-goods booths, full of cotton fabrics from Guatemala's mills, men's shirts, blue overalls, hats, sandals and the thousand-and-one oddments that the Indian women love to buy—blue and green and pink combs, ribbons, buttons, pins and the strings of blue and gilt and silver-tinsel beads from Czecho-Slovakia that are so rapidly replacing the old necklaces of coins and coral the Indian women used to wear. You see old crones with the latter, but members of the younger set have almost all made the switch to the modern article. As a matter of fact, sentiment aside, the Christmas-tree beads are really more beautiful against these brown skins. And they are far more efficient at hiding the bladder-like goiters which afflict two out of every ten women up in the mountains of this district.

Even without goiters, though, these women of the Chichicastenango district are, to say the least, not beautiful. They are squat, hunched creatures, prematurely wrinkled by hard work and child-bearing, their bare feet stubbed and gnarled, their coarse black hair unkempt, their features flat and broad. Once in a long while you find one that is nice-looking, clean, her hair neatly braided. These are usually women from near the town itself, daughters or wives of Indian farmers who are fairly well-to-do. But even they are not improved by the local wrap-around skirt of heavy blue material cinched tightly at the waist and cut off

short at the knees. Their *huipiles* are prettier, of brown cotton woven in bright red patterns, sometimes (for religious processions) of white decorated in red and yellow. All of them have babies slung on their backs and half a dozen tiny toddlers at heel. Not all, however, are pregnant, though at first we thought so. Hookworm swells the belly too, and the barefoot Indian is an easy mark for the parasite.

All this, though, was regulation market-day color; more of it, perhaps, but still just about what you would see on any Sunday. What marked it as a special *fiesta* was the presence of so many from other villages and such distant ones.

The market-place filled up with them in no time; they trickled in through every side street. From the terrace of the Inn we had seen them coming by every road, tiny crawling figures bent under their immense loads of pots, mats, woven goods or huge sacks of *chiles*. And in the plaza we were dazzled by new dress, strange types. We were beginning to learn something of the lore of costumes, and C. would clutch my arm as she pointed them out; the man from Sololá with the checked apron or kilt—*rodillera* is the Spanish word—of black and white wool; the pair from Todos Santos in red striped long trousers; the four men in red jackets with galloons of black braid on the sleeves, up for the celebration from San Juan Zacatepéquez. One very striking girl passed us, taller than the rest, dressed in a full, long skirt that swept the ground and a beautiful white *huipil* heavily embroidered in green and red and

purple flowers. She had twisted purple and green and black ribbons in her hair and her necklace was of the old kind, dozens of large silver coins strung in a thick chain. When we admired her, Federico told us where she came from; Sacapulas, it was, a lower and warmer village, noted for its salt-beds. She stopped and allowed us to look more closely at her necklace, and smiled with dignity when we admired the baby she was carrying. The child's face was carefully covered, and C. asked her why. She looked at us in surprise. "Because of the market," she answered, as though anyone should know. "It is not good air." She was right, it wasn't. What with the dust and constant coughing and spitting of the Indians who all suffer more or less from respiratory troubles, it was very bad air indeed. But she was the only one we saw who seemed to care about it. We were going to ask her about Sacapulas when her young husband came and took her away disapprovingly. He was right, too. She wasn't a side-show. If anybody was, in that market, we were.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the whole market, though, was its quiet. Mexican markets are crackling with life and sound, full of bellowing men and screeching women thrusting their wares at you, cajoling you with toothy smiles, roaring with laughter at each other's jokes, busily inventing new and startling cries to help make a sale. But here, next door to Mexico, there is none of that. Indians shuffle silently through the intricate pattern of the aisles, stopping now and then at the booths of their choice, perhaps fingering a piece of goods they admire. If they

ask a price they do it in the briefest possible group of monosyllables and the seller replies in kind; it is almost as though they were afraid of being overheard. Even when a trade was actually in progress, the chaffering went on without any of the shouting, the gestures, the passionate debate that marks the smallest transaction in the markets of Mexico. There was no laughter to speak of; the children, when they ran and kicked a ball, did it with a minimum of noise. The Indian of Guatemala must enjoy his market-day; he never misses if he can help it. But he takes his pleasure uncommonly seriously.

Only the bell, tolling in the tower of the Church of Santo Tomás, reminded us that this was indeed the beginning of a *fiesta* and not just any market day. No—to be accurate about it, there was another thing. Up at the end of the square was a small section given over to games of chance, and the barkers—*ladinos,* all of them, not Indians—droned their chant as barkers do everywhere. There was a Bingo layout, with all the prizes exhibited on shelves; the only difference here was that instead of numbers, which most of the Indians wouldn't be able to read, the little cards before the players had their squares filled with pictures, an ear of corn, a horse, a pig, a *chile*-pepper. But the biggest crowd was grouped around a tiny table marked out in colored squares, on which the Indians risked their *centavo* and half-*centavo* pieces. It was the old game of the revolving arrow which, as at home, never seemed to stop at a color that paid more than a yellow pencil, though there were tea-sets, knives and other encouraging awards

well displayed. We watched it for several minutes but the stout and sweating *ladino* that ran it spent all his time raking in the coppers. In thirty spins of the arrow only two prizes were won—both pencils. We didn't like the man's looks much and besides we were fresh from reading old Friar Thomas Gage's notes on the chicanery of the *ladino* and his cold-blooded treatment of the Indian, wherefore we liked this one even less. His piggy eyes glittered as he grasped the coins. His arrow spun again, and stopped once more on a no-pay color. We had no reason to be unpleasant to him, but we simply couldn't resist it. I had been wondering about the remarkable way in which that arrow did what was expected of it by its operator, and as I ruminated C. put the suspicion into words. "Do you suppose," she said, "that he's controlling the thing?" On second thought I realized that he couldn't be. As a matter of fact, he didn't need to; the law of averages would take care of him in a game stacked so heavily in his favor. But the notion gave us both an idea. We waited, and the arrow whirled and stopped again. No prize. With an elaborate gesture I raised the fringed cloth that covered the table and peered inquisitively beneath, C. down on one knee, too, her countenance the picture of horrified amazement. No. There was nothing crooked about the game. But our *ladino* friend's empurpled face as he realized our suspicions was something to look at. And the news about the *gringos* and their joke went round the market among the Indians all day. Federico told us about it after dinner, though it was clear that he couldn't make up his mind whether to take pride in the fact that

his tourist charges had so distinguished themselves, or to be annoyed at our making him conspicuous.

It was cool after sundown, but the highland country was having an Indian summer season and it was possible to sit out on the Inn terrace after coffee and smoke and look at the stars. Don Mario Molina, an assistant manager—he had studied at a French university to become an engineer but no engineering job seemed to need him at home in Guatemala—brought out his guitar and sang sad songs so well that Federico maintained a respectful and admiring silence. There had been a beautiful blonde girl in the last group of tourists, and Don Mario's heart had gone away with her. "Ah," he told us, "you should see her. Streamlined!" He made passes with his hands to demonstrate the precise nature and degree of this streamlining and then plunked more vigorously than ever on his guitar to hide his emotion. Because she had brought up the question in the first place, C. sympathized, but reminded him that in three more days there would be another crowd up from the port and the City. Perhaps there would be another blonde, or at any rate a brunette. Don Mario brightened. "Surely!" he said, crooning the word. "Surely! There is, each time, another one!" The guitar in his hands rippled a quick succession of honeyed chords. "Yes," said Don Mario, "I am learning the hotel business now." But he did not seem quite so unhappy about it.

In our room the fire crackled on the hearth. Unfamiliar scents came in at the window, sharp, clean odors of new

flowers and trees we did not know. From the village we could hear, very faintly, the notes of the *marimbas* that helped sell liquor to the Indian in each crowded saloon around the square. The Church bell had stopped tolling, but from across the little valley still came the throb of the Indian drum. *Tom. Tom-tom. Tom-tom. Tom.* Remote, insistent, it talked out there on the hillside about temples and the old gods and hidden, forbidden things the drummer did not know but only felt as he thumped them out on the taut skin. *Tom. Tom-tom. Tom-tom. Tom.* To its ancient rhythms we fell asleep.

VIII

BESIDES Indians, there are two things without which no Indian *fiesta* is complete—*cantinas* and *cohetes;* saloons and skyrockets. We had seen, smelled and heard the saloons in full blast on the first day of the feast. The rockets we learned about next morning.

For the purposes of the rocketeers, morning begins at about five oclock. By breakfast time we were beginning to get used to the noise. By noon we hardly noticed it at all. But when some three hundred rockets went off all at once in the middle of the afternoon I knew something must be wrong.

I had been lying down, very much at peace in slippers and bathrobe, attempting to make something of the scholarly German of F. J. Lentz's "Aus der Hochlande der Maya," and C. had gone down to the plaza, she said just to have a look round but the bargaining gleam was in her eye.

There had been rockets occasionally, the drums in the houses of the *cofradías,* the religious confraternities on the fringe of the village, had thumped rhythmically as always, and the *marimbas* in every liquor-store kept up their whining tunes. It was a regulation *fiesta* afternoon, no more and no less. Then, suddenly, a bombardment broke loose, the nearest thing to a full artillery barrage since 1918. I dropped Lentz and dashed for the square.

What had happened was one of those charming little incidents that are always just around the corner whenever fire and gunpowder get together. The Indian who had charge of the skyrockets had lit the fuse of one and was holding it between finger and thumb, waiting for it to soar about its business. Instead, it backfired, spouting a stream of sparks downward. And right at the Indian's feet were all the rockets and bombs for the next two days of official noise. As I have said, about three hundred of them went off in the space of sixty seconds. Very few went up; most of them shot along the ground or exploded where they were, scattering fire and fragments everywhere. The crowd didn't scatter as an American crowd would; everybody just stood and gaped until the police jumped in and got them going. It was all over in a moment, and the astonishing thing was that nobody was much hurt. One little girl had been knocked down in the rush and her face was scratched. One small pig had been trampled to death. But that was all. All, that is, excepting the Indian fusilier who had started the whole disturbance. His hand, they said, had been badly burned by the defective rocket. But no one was

able to confirm the rumor, because the instant he realized what he had done that Indian went away very quickly. As for C., I found her after a while. She had simply ducked behind an enormous bale of *chile*-peppers and calmly waited for things to stop happening. It was only when I saw the look on her face that I realized I still had on the bathrobe and slippers.

Afterward, Federico told us the Indians' explanation of the unfortunate affair. It was all because the *costumbre,* the custom, had not been observed. The rockets had been blessed at the Church, of course; that part of it was all right. But, in his half-pagan, half-Christian fashion, the Indian of Chichicastenango does not feel that to be quite enough. For years it was the custom to take all the rockets up the hill behind the village to the old stone idol that stands there, and have them blessed again, Maya style. It wasn't done with parades and brass bands exactly; the older men simply sneaked off with bundles of the bombs, saw that they were duly and ceremonially presented to the image and brought them back again. Everybody knew about it, and nobody said anything about it. It was like that. This year, however, the younger men had objected. They said it was old-fashioned nonsense. All that kind of stuffy business had gone out years ago. It was like believing that the Maize God sent the babies, when everybody who had any sense knew perfectly well that the midwife brought them in her big bundle. And there were enough of the young men so that their ridicule prevailed. The rockets had not been carried up the hill. Their elders had shaken

their heads and said that no good would come of it. Now they had been proved right. Now the smart young men could dig down and pay for more rockets—and go over across the hills to the town where they were made and get them, too. The young men paid and went. But next year they will march their explosives up the hill to the idol and get that blessing. And like it.

We didn't suspect then that we would see the idol ourselves, but we did. We had not gone out especially to look at the thing; we were merely paying a social call and the idol came as an afterthought. But Diego had asked us to visit his house. He is one of Chichicastenango's leading Indian citizens, pure Quiché, the head of one of the local *cofradías*. When there is a big market, as at fiesta-time, Diego has a booth in which he displays the *huipiles,* belts, headbands and other articles his wife and daughters weave. He does not make any particular effort to sell them, but sits beside his booth smoking and discussing village business with other men. If Chichicastenango had a service club, Diego would be a prominent member of it, present at all luncheons, respected and deferred to, doubtless affectionately called by his initials. We had talked to him on several occasions and had been invited to come and see him at home, so we went.

Diego lives near the village; a walk of perhaps ten minutes took us out to his little *rancho*. He grows corn and beans, of course; he has a horse or two, some sheep, pigs, chickens and turkeys. Those are what any Indian considers basic household equipment. But Diego is also a bricklayer;

he has built several of Chichicastenango's larger houses and naturally his own group of dwellings. It takes several to house the family—Diego, his wife and their nine children, and the *viejito,* the old boy, who is Diego's father. And there has to be a separate and special building for the studio. For Diego's chief business is making the masks and costumes for the native dances; the curious pink-and-gold false-faces for the Dance of the Conquistadores in which all the Spaniards are represented as excessively blond and Teutonic looking, and the fantastic tigers, jaguars, deer and Wild-Men-of-Borneo that are used in the older ritual dances that have come down from nobody knows what Mayan cycle.

As we came up the hill we saw that there were four buildings altogether, longish single-story affairs arranged in a rectangle around a sort of court in which several thousand cobs of corn, more or less, were spread out to dry in the sun. One building is really the house, in which by some magic of condensation the whole family eats, sleeps and does most of its living. One is the studio, hung with the leering masks, the purple and green and pink velveteens from which the costumes are made, and the spangled hats and elaborate feathered headdresses that go with them. In a corner was the small foot-loom on which the narrow *cintas,* the headbands, are woven; when we arrived one of Diego's assistants was treadling away furiously, his hands working automatically with the threads of yellow, blue and red as he looked round to see what was wanted. In another corner, however, stood a more modern piece of equipment.

The old hand-loom is all very well for its purpose, but when it comes to whipping together a rush order of twenty-seven costumes by dinner-time tomorrow night, then there's nothing like up-to-date methods. So Diego has that marvelous American invention, a sewing-machine, by Singer.

The third side of the little court is taken up by the stable, an open-front shed in which a gray horse, one of the small but sturdy breed you see down here, was quietly munching an unpleasant-looking mixture of dry grass and cornhusks. The fourth building, though, is the most interesting of the lot. Here Diego has another kind of shop, a display-room in which he exhibits all the various textiles his wife and daughters weave. Over against one wall stood the grandfather's *marimba,* a small one with the gourd sounding-boxes that were used in Guatemala long before somebody invented the flat-sided mahogany ones the big and expensive instruments have. But the rest of the space was filled with *huipiles* woven in the browns and reds of Chichicastenango, with *tzutes* or headcloths for men, brilliant scarlet with woven designs in yellow and purple, with *servilletas,* cloths in which the Indian wraps things—any things. There were even one or two suits of the heavy black wool worn by the men of Chichicastenango, the short jacket and knee-length trousers embroidered richly in purple and yellow and red silk in the traditional designs that indicate the rank or caste, the family standing, so to put it, of the wearer. On the wall were pictures, dozens of them; Diego has an eye for pictures. There were the ever-present Cafiaspirina Bayer calendars, of course, exhibiting an assortment

of voluptuously lithographed maidens in various stages of modest deshabille. There were saints, of course; a great profusion of them, bordered with cherubim in impossible attitudes. High on the end wall were two tinted photographs of Diego and his wife, Juanita, taken on their wedding day, both very grim and determined looking. Around and in between the other pictures were many snapshots of all sizes that visitors had taken of Diego and his family. Diego likes pictures, and likes to be photographed. In fact, since we were carrying cameras in plain sight, it was obvious that we took pictures ourselves. Wouldn't we perhaps like to take some right now?

We would and we did. Juanita showed us exactly how she threaded the intricate patterns into the fabrics she wove, though she could not explain how she carried in her head all the details of the immensely complicated designs. Diego and his father demonstrated for us how they embroidered, which is a man's job in this village, by old custom, and showed us the method of tying the *tzute* around the head so that the tassels hang at just the correct angle. The grandfather had two of the children carry out his *marimba* for him so he could play it in the sun where we could get a picture of him doing it. Afterward he asked us in a whisper if we would please send him prints of the pictures in which he appeared. Diego was his son, to be sure, and a good boy, too, but he liked to have his own things. We assured him that we understood exactly how it was. Two friends of Diego's came in to call while we were doing all the photographing; out-of-towners who had

strolled the sixty kilometers over the mountains for the feast. They were men from Nahualá, wearing a checked black-and-white kilt much like that we had seen in Sololá. But they were quite a different breed of cats, these fellows. It is Nahualá that has its own peculiar form of municipal government, different from the rest of the country, forbids the use of alcohol in the village and doesn't want any stranger, least of all a white tourist, within the town limits overnight. The Nahualá people don't care much about being photographed, either, but since we were friends of Diego's one of these men agreed to pose.

It was, as it sounds, a picture-soiree, no doubt about it. It was also as pleasant an hour as we had spent in Guatemala. Diego is a merchant, and a shrewd enough business man, too. But he had intimated to Federico, who told us what he said, that he did not want us to buy anything. If we really wished to get any of his textiles they would be on display in his booth in the market-place and for sale there. Here we were his guests, not customers. We shook his hand ceremoniously and left with regret; Diego had been the perfect host and we liked him. As we threaded our way among the corn-cobs the old grandfather hopped nimbly over and hissed *"Estampa!"* in my ear. I nodded as brightly as I could and said *"Sí, sí! Cómo no!"* though I had no idea what he meant. As a matter of fact, as he spoke it there was a rather bitter sound about the word, and I wondered if somehow we had offended him. But Federico cleared it all up when we were out of earshot. The old fellow was merely reminding me of my promise.

An *estampa* is an impression, a "stamping"; it may even be an engraving, a printing-press or a footstep. But it is also a photographic print. The *viejito* didn't want us to forget that we had him in our camera and were going to send him the evidence when we got him out.

The hilltop where the idol stands is beyond Diego's house and above it. Federico had told us about the place the day before, but now he showed a strange reluctance to go up. The climb was stiff, he said, very. We would tire ourselves greatly, probably too much. Did we not remember the altitude? Surely we would not be so foolish as to overdo when we were something like seven thousand feet up in the mountains. And especially for a woman it would be too much to attempt.

We stopped him in the middle of his fluent arguments. Why, we asked bluntly, shouldn't we go. What, flatly, was his real reason for trying so hard to convince us that we should stay away? Federico looked fixedly at a spot ten feet past my left shoulder and repeated doggedly that it was a very difficult climb. But C. stuck to the point. What was Federico afraid of? Indians? Surely nobody could object to our taking a walk. The mountains were free to all, weren't they? Federico, more uncomfortable than ever, said he supposed they were. "Well then," said C. "what are we waiting for? Come on!" We came on.

The path zigzagged up the hillside, one switchback after another, like the long trail up the Volcán de Agua. Once we tried cutting off a long hairpin turn by clawing our

way straight up to the next loop above us, but we didn't do it again. Federico was right enough about the altitude; we both sat down and panted for five minutes after that mere ten-foot scramble. The little hill was covered with scrub-oak and sweet-smelling pines, and we went on again, setting one foot after the other, leaning forward to throw our weight ahead of us, not talking, saving what little breath we had. Then, all at once, we were up, and at the edge of a small clearing from which all trees and underbrush had been carefully cut away. We had heard no sound as we climbed, but now we knew that every step of our approach had been noted. For the little open space was filled with Indians, just standing there silent, unblinking, waiting to see what we were going to do. Two of them who had been sweeping the earth in front of the tiny altar froze in position as they saw us, their straw whiskbrooms held stiffly before them. Between the brooms the idol stared out at us.

The thing was as grotesque a figure as you can imagine; crudely cut out of a grayish stone, looking into vacancy with eyes that didn't match, blackened with the soot of ceremonial fires and candles, crowned with whitish bird droppings. There was a protuberance that might have been a nose; below it there may once have been a mouth. It stood perhaps three feet high, and on both sides heaps of the same dark gray rock fanned out in an open V, preventing any approach to the image excepting from the front. A dozen or so candle-ends and a scattering of withered flower petals covered the ground immediately before it.

There was the acrid smell of smoke in the air, though none of the candles were lighted and nothing was burning as far as we could see. As for the Indians, they made no move at all, said nothing. They did not even seem to be angry. But without saying a word they told us to get out. I cannot say how they did it but they did. The air was charged with the unspoken command; we could feel it roll toward us: *Go! This is not your place!* It was much more than just our knowing they didn't want us. They were definitely, deliberately, confidently willing us away.

Well, it wasn't our place. We went, picking our way across the pine-needles, trying to make no noise, though none of us could have said why it seemed better to be quiet. I did not look back but C. glanced over her shoulder as we dropped below the crest of the hill and found the path again. The small brown men were still standing there, immobile, silent, sending us about our business.

We got back to the village square just in time to find a procession in full swing, no quiet, worshipful affair like the one we had seen in Antigua by candlelight, but a fine big hullabaloo, with the carriers of the holy image constantly in danger of being jostled off their feet by crowds of pushing, hurrahing boys and men, and the *marimbas* playing dance tunes.

The purpose of it was to take the Saint from the house of the *cofradía* to the Church so that he might be blessed. As we came up the side street we saw him go by, a fine, white-bearded figure, excellently carved and painted, held

shoulder-high on his platform and shaded by a canopy of red cloth fringed with gold. We did not recognize him and inquired from a group of youngsters near us. But they didn't know, and scraped their big toes in the dust, looking down at the ground as though by some miracle they might find their Saint's name written there. "Is it Santo Tomás?" we asked, knowing him to be the patron saint of Chichicastenango, but that wasn't right. We thought of all the male saints we could remember—San Lucas, San Pedro, Santiago, San Antonio. No, it was none of those. Finally one very small boy ventured an opinion. It was, he thought, maybe *Señor Jefe*. After a startled moment we saw what he meant; to him the word *"Jefe"* meant simply the man at the top, the highest he could think of. Very likely it was the majestic white beard of the image that had put it into his head. But we didn't have time to ask. The other boys laughed shrilly and they all scuttled away. Anyway, I wanted a picture of the procession and the Saint, and ducked into a store to get it through the doorway. You are not supposed to take pictures of any religious festival in Chichicastenango. They don't like it, and sometimes, if they catch you at it, they are apt to object violently. There is a good reason for that. Not so long ago the Hollywood company that was making some scenes for a picture in which Tarzan was supposed to visit Guatemala got into the Church itself, set up floodlights and cameras and when the worshipers came to pray, unlimbered the whole flashing, whirring business. The Indians, rightly enough, stoned them out of the place. Ever since, they have been espe-

cially touchy about cameras near churches and processions.

At any rate, I was careful about the camera. The *ladinos* who ran the shop didn't mind of course; to them the whole procession was just another Indian foolishness. I did get the Saint with the white beard, a good picture. But I put the camera in its case after that; there were too many nasty looks coming our way, and our experience on the Hill of the Idol was still fresh in my mind.

The real color of the *fiesta,* however, was over on the Church steps. (How wise those old builders were when they made the approach to the Church a stage in itself, for the better display of the pageantry that is so large a part of the Indians' religious life!)

One by one the leading saints were brought to stand ranked across the dazzling white front of the building. Three of them—Santo Tomás, San Sebastián and Santa Cecilia—were framed in red cloth arches, decorated with spangles, gilt paper mirrors and feathers of blue, yellow, green and purple. Santa Cecilia was particularly fine; she wore a magnificent orange corduroy bathrobe, plainly from North America. It was not a very clean bathrobe and the belt was gone, but the safety-pin that caught it together shone on her breast like a jewel. Other lesser saints flanked them, graded downward, their canopies less ornate, probably from the houses of the minor *cofradías.* There were half a dozen *marimbas* playing; brought out for the moment from their more familiar corners in the saloons, they were now serving God in the clean evening air. Later they

could go back and do their duty by Mammon again. Up in the highest corner of the bell-tower was a drummer and beside him another figure playing the *chirimilla*—the raucous, nasal five-note flute that always accompanies the ancient drum. These paid no attention at all to whatever the *marimbas* might be playing, but went on in their own fashion, over and over, the same shrill notes on the fife, the same rhythmic, thumping notes on the drum. Then, as we came closer, we saw what was really drawing the crowd so close to the steps.

Since morning a rope had been rigged from the church tower down to a stake in the ground at the foot of the steps; church-front and earth were two sides of a right-angled triangle and the rope was its long hypotenuse. It was doubled, run through a pulley at top and bottom, and suspended on it was the queerest little figure we had ever seen.

It was roughly a foot high, the image of a man on a horse; the whole thing carved out of wood and gayly painted. He was quite Spanish, dressed like an elegant *caballero,* his saddle-pockets of real leather, strings of coins dangling round his neck like Hawaiian leis. His horse was white, a curious animal, very massive as to legs and a trifle foreshortened, as though the sculptor hadn't seen very many horses. A hole was bored through him and the lower rope ran through that. The upper strand was fastened firmly to the image, front and back, and with this primitive arrangement two Indians were hauling him up and down, up and down again, endlessly. He never quite reached the top, nor did they let him sag quite to the ground. To the

thump of the drum, he inched his way to within three or four yards of the tower and bell, and bobbed down again to within a foot or two of the bottom. Then the men pulling the rope did it all over again. Sometimes rockets were let off—they had their new supply already—and sometimes the journey of the little wooden man was made in silence. But it never stopped. Certainly he was an important part of the *fiesta*. We decided that if we could possibly find out about him, we would.

The first answer to our question was what we had expected. Federico always had that one ready; whenever he didn't know about something he said it was *costumbre*. We said we had guessed that. But what else? What, for intance, just as a beginning, did they call the image. Federico said he would try to find out.

He came back in a minute or two with the report that the image was Santiago—Saint James, patron of all Guatemala. But when we asked why he should be ridden up and down on a horse on a rope, Federico shrugged and said "*Quién sabe?*"—"Who knows?" No one he spoke to could give even a reasonable explanation. Anyway, we were convinced that it had nothing to do with Santiago at all. And we were a bit piqued, too. The blankness that comes over the faces of people when you ask them things like that is always irritating. They should know, and they don't; it's all too stupid. (Not that it's confined to Guatemala; I don't mean that. Try stopping someone on the street in your own town some fine winter's night and asking him why people dress up Christmas trees on December 25th

and how a pine-tree with tinsel snow on it came to symbolize a birth that took place under olives and figs, and see where you get.) But the whole affair was a challenge and we were bound we'd get to the bottom of it.

We did, eventually, through the kindness of a gentleman who had lived forty years in Chichicastenango and absorbed all the folklore that had come his way.

The image, first, is called Tzicoláj. There are other spellings, because the word is a phonetic rendering of the Quiché name, and phonetics have a habit of varying according to the hearer. The nearest we could get to a straight-line story was that Tzicoláj represents a good many things. For instance, he is partly the figure of a Spaniard who came to this district after the Conquest and first taught the Indians to make fireworks. Santos Pérez was his name, and he lived all the rest of his life on his farm just outside Chichicastenango. On feast-days he would come riding in on his horse with his load of rockets for the celebration. Hence the horse in the image—the legs too large because it was the four legs of the strange animal that caught the eye of the original sculptor—and the miniature leather pouch in which the old fellow used to carry his bombs. Hence, also, the string of coins around the image's neck. Old Santos Pérez grew rich on his rockets and his farming, and the coins symbolize his wealth. So far, so good.

But that is only part of the story; legends are never all of a piece.

For the Quiché Indian did not have to wait for the

Conquest to worship. He had his gods already, many of them natural deities. Especially he worshipped, in his own way, things that grew toward the sky—toward the life-giving sun. Fire rose upward. Canes rose upward. Presumably, when a man died and his spirit left him it went upward too. So that this matter of Tzicoláj is all bound up with ancient beliefs and practices. Perhaps he is partly the first rocket-maker; the Quiché word for fire forms part of his name. But he also embodies the whole idea of rising toward the sky—the sun, which is also fire. And since anything that rises upward is a help in carrying man's prayers up with it, the endless journey of Tzicoláj up and down his rope is partly a sign and symbol of prayer, too. That is why, sometimes during the performance, a ball of fireworks is tied to the little horse and allowed to sputter and blaze and send its sparks upward also, as he rides.

So he rode, all the rest of the day and long into the night. Down at the foot of the church steps were large tables on which were set the crosses and other fine silver pieces from the houses of the *cofradías* and from the Church itself, and at the table sat the old men of the village, the heads of clans and confraternities, making sundry mysterious passes in the air, occasionally fortifying themselves with nips of brandy out of bottles kept beside them on the ground. Now and then Tzicoláj is taken down and given a short rest; when that happens privileged Indians may pay five *centavos* for a minute or two of dancing with him cradled in their arms. Afterward the old men take the little horseman over to their table full of silver, wipe his

face with a cloth and talk to him, sipping meanwhile from their bottle. Now and then they laughed; probably they were telling him funny stories. The Indian looks at all his images, even those of the Saints themselves, as more or less personal friends. No one would see anything unusual about telling Tzicoláj the latest joke. Then back he would go again, on his rope for another interminable ride, up and down, a gallant little speck against the immense white expanse of the church. We learned later that down in Atitlán they have a somewhat similar ceremony in which two figures are hauled up and down a rope. But those are different. They are, in fact, pure post-Conquest. Because one of them is Judas Iscariot, and the other is Don Pedro de Alvarado himself, who beat the Indians of Atitlán—the Tzutuhiles—by the device of persuading the Quiché and Cakchiquel tribes to turn against them in treachery. That is something else entirely. Our little Tzicoláj is unique. We'll always remember him affectionately. His bland, painted countenance showed plainly that he was having such a good time.

As for the why of all this, and particularly of the fife and drum as part of a Church ritual, the answer is the same one you get wherever you go. It is an Indian custom. The saints, the processions, even the flower-petals that we saw before the idol and also in the church before the images —we could understand those. None of it was quite like any other religious celebration we had ever seen but it was close enough. But the fife? The drum? Those were our sticking-point. What had they to do with saints and feast

days? How did they ever get into the picture? "Ah, Señor, who knows? It is an Indian custom!"

Some day, maybe, a scientist with an inquiring mind and the persistence of ten men will dig back into Indian lore, will search the records, pore over the "Popol Vuh" which is the earliest existing record of Quiché customs (it was discovered, by the way, in Chichicastenango in the very building next to the Church where Father Rossbach now lives) and explain how these Indian rites came to be so inextricably mixed with proper church ceremony. Maybe he will and maybe not. The chances are that no one will ever know exactly. The Indians themselves can have no idea. This manner of doing things came down from one generation to the next, changing, developing, losing a bit here and adding a bit there. Today's Quiché, dignified and very sure of himself as he is here in this region, does as his father did before him; further than that he does not care to go. This ceremonial way is the right way. It must be. It could not be anything else. It is, obviously, The Truth. So he worships as he has learned, burning the same *copal* incense his ancestors burned—to different gods which were also the right gods, the Only Truth—and drumming as his forefathers drummed to be sure that their entreaties were heard. Meanwhile the processions, the images of the saints, the *marimba* music even, are all part of the same ceremony as the thin piping and the hollow drum. Naturally. It is The Way Things Are Done.

There remain, of course, the rocket-bombs without which no *fiesta,* religious or not, is complete.

Here the rocket is part of every ritual. Bombs announce the beginning of a procession and its end. The skyrocket is the Indian's way of exploding his delight at a wedding, and it is also his fashion of saying good-bye to a dead friend. It is not a question of display at night-time; the noise is the point, and the *swish-pause-bang!* is just as effective at high noon. And it goes up—up to the sky and the sun. The Maudslays, in their "Glimpse at Guatemala," repeat an old anecdote that illustrates this passion for ceremonial sound, the tale of an Indian *cacique,* a chief who was brought to Spain to visit the court of Charles V. He had been told that he must always speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth when His Majesty asked him anything, and so when Charles idly inquired of him one morning what his countrymen would be doing with themselves in his country at this hour, the chief thought a while and replied, "Señor, at this time my countrymen are firing rockets." The Emperor smiled, and at noon asked the Indian the same question, receiving the same answer. Again, in the evening, he called the *cacique* to him and said, "Now that the sun has set and the work of the day is done, how are your countrymen amusing themselves?" "Señor," answered the old Indian, "they are still firing off rockets!"

Remembering this story we walked to the Inn slowly in the cool evening air, the pulsing of the drum still filling the air around us and the whine of the Indian pipe still coming down to us from the top of the church of Santo Tomás de Chichicastenango. At seven o'clock sharp, the bell began tolling; someone else had climbed the tower to tug at the

short cord hanging from the clapper; that was none of the business of the two men who kept at their piping and drumming, oblivious to the clangor of the bell at their heads. As we turned in at the Inn gate two more rockets swished and banged behind us. Had another procession arrived at the church? Perhaps it was a funeral. Or was it just a way of announcing that it was time for dinner? I asked Don Mario, but before he replied I knew what his answer would be. He shrugged and as he opened his mouth C. chimed in with him at the first word. Together they told me. "Who knows, Señor? It is an old Indian custom!"

IX

QUEZALTENANGO is the second city of the Republic, an old-fashioned town set at the end of a magnificent valley over which presides the dark, precise cone of the Volcán Santa María. It has been the government's policy to establish Guatemala City as the country's heart and nerve-center; there was too great concentration of wealth and importance in Quezaltenango, and most of it foreign, too. So there took place a definite, well-planned, systematic draining away of Quezaltenango's life-blood. Now it sits up against the mountains, solid and European in appearance, but only the shell of what it once was. Its opera house, for instance, is far grander than anything in the capital, but it is hardly ever used any more. Its park in the center of town is older, its bandstand more massive, its walks broader and its trees more shady than anything in Guatemala City. But Quezaltenango is the ghost of its

old self. Though there are people enough living in the town, it has an unoccupied air; it is a city that has been passed by. You do not need to know its story; you sense it at once. High in the hills and cold, beaten by the winds that sweep down from the peaks, dusty when it is not raining, seldom well sunned because of the clouds that swirl round Santa María and the fogs that blanket its valley, Quezaltenango seems as remote, as different as though it were in another country. Yet Guatemaltecos who have lived there love it as they do no other part of their country. "You must see Quezaltenango," they told us down in the city. "There is no place like it!"

From Chichicastenango the distance looks like nothing at all on the map, the sort of thing you could do with one hand tied behind you in half an hour or so. The fact of the matter is that it is a good three-hour drive any way you take it. The road winds uphill and down again, around and through the inevitable *barrancas* until you feel like a passenger on a Coney Island Trip to Mars. Federico informed us that one stretch of it is known as the Road of Sixty-Four Curves, but that is an estimate made with characteristic Spanish modesty. On the map, indeed, a portion of ten miles or so is known as the *Desconsuelo*—The Mournful—because it is so high and so lonely. Here the highway reaches something like 11,000 feet and you roll along on what seems to the crest of the world. Even the familiar corn-patches disappear; there is little beside rocks and scrub and little trickling streams. Yet the road is never empty. Federico tooted his horn faithfully at every curve

and it was a good thing he did. There were always Indians around the corner, going to next week's market, coming back from last week's, footing it to Guatemala City to see the President or perhaps just going. We asked Federico how the Indian got any work done; he seems to be invariably on the move, and you can't cultivate your crops thirty miles from home carrying a load of pots. But Federico didn't know. He just said the Indians were a Happy People.

Even though it was still only the middle of the afternoon the cold, sharp air had us pretty well chilled by the time we dropped down into the small valley in which sits the town of Totonicapán. This is where the Indians specialize on furniture and on headbands, the *cintas* that the women braid into their hair and into which the weavers squeeze every bit of color they can think of. Just beyond it is San Cristóbal, which gives the valley its name, and which boasts a natural *pila* or washing-place of warm water that bubbles from some hidden volcanic spring.

In San Cristóbal there are still many families that have kept pure their Indian blood, and it was the daughter of one such family that we noticed first as we stopped to photograph the women at their scrubbing.

She could not have been more than fifteen. Her *huipil,* even though it was a workday garment, was one of the most beautifully woven affairs we had seen in a country full of fine textiles. Up in these higher mountains all the Indians have more color in their faces, but this child's cheeks were positively rosy with health. Federico told her that the *señora* said she was very pretty and that the *señor*

would like to take her picture, which sent her into a fit of giggles. But though she shook her head she began to adjust the strings of beads round her neck. That was evidence we would get our picture, and eventually she posed with charming shyness. She was so nice about it that we thought we would like to send her a print and asked Federico to get her name and address for us. His translation of the request almost stopped all work in the *pila*. What the other women and girls said to little Petrona we shall never know; it was all in the Indian dialect and even Federico couldn't understand it. But it brought on new spasms of laughter, though we got what we were after and later sent her her picture, thigh-deep in the warm water, scrubbing at a knotted garment on the stone curbing. As we left Federico spoke swiftly to her again, and the women were off into another gale of hysterics. This time, though, we knew why. Our ear for the quick Spanish syllables was improving, and we had caught his question. What he had said was "Why don't you come down to the City some time? Don't you like to dance?" When we were back in the car we told him we had understood. He was embarrassed for at least five kilometers.

There are several hotels in Quezaltenango, but we were told that the one at which we had reserved a room was the most American.

Perhaps it is. The beds were clean enough and the food was eatable, though mostly overcooked and greasy. It was freezing cold, but then so was any other house in Quez-

altenango at that time of the year; in December the high fogs hang over the valley for days at a time. There was no such thing as running water in any room, though there was a bath For Gentlemen and Ladies sandwiched in between the bar and the kitchen. Still, you can't expect more modern accommodations in the highlands. What made the hotel really bad was its proprietor.

I don't suppose anyone will ever learn why he went into a business he so manifestly dislikes and for which he is so clearly not suited. He is a large, gross German, well over six feet, with a face scarred by what may or may not be sword-cuts from University days in the Fatherland. C. would have none of that; she said and still says that she believes them to be wounds inflicted by guests of less pacific disposition than ourselves. Perhaps his liver is bad, or maybe his spleen. Whatever it is, something has rendered him permanently crabbed. He had been notified of our coming, wherefore he grunted, *"Ja. Ocho,"* which signified that we were to occupy room 8. We asked if we could possibly get a little hot water. He made a sound that indicated his need for some good, clean bicarbonate of soda, said "No!" and turned his back on us while a frightened barefoot Indian porter lugged our bags through a patio that was a dank jungle of stunted ferns in gasoline cans and up the stairway to our room. There were four beds in it, we never learned why, though we did discover that the pillows were made of some substance similar to reinforced concrete. We asked our Indian at what time one ate dinner here, and he said "At the seven, please," and scuttled

dowstairs like the White Rabbit. As for dinner itself, that is perhaps better not described. There were some hot foods and some cold ones, all served by a nervous waiter with no front teeth who had been so bullied by the proprietor that he jumped as though he were shot each time we spoke to him. The dining-room was chill as the tomb; after the meal the patio was even colder. The disagreeable Herr Trink had disappeared so we were able to bribe the cook to find us enough hot water to fill two bottles that we had brought with us from the Mayan Inn and crawled into bed with them. Quezaltenango is very military—another government policy is to keep a strong garrison here—and we went to sleep to the tune of bugles blowing long and complicated calls, a cold and brassy sound that has meant Quezaltenango to us ever since.

One of the reasons we had come to this city was because it was close to what we had been told was one of the beautiful sights of Guatemala, the tiny mountain hamlet of San Francisco El Alto—Saint Francis the High.

The trip from Quezaltenango is a short one, half an hour's drive, most of it nearly straight up. The village itself is all cobbled hills and sharp declivities, but at its highest point, just in front of the old church, a plaza has been built of banked earth and stone retaining walls until there is an approximately level space for market day. It is much higher than Quezaltenango, almost 9000 feet; the hills are covered with pines and the air is clear and bracing. You are really above the clouds here; when we looked back, Quezal-

tenango was still blanketed. Only the great volcano of Santa María raised its cone above the sea of mist. But the white front of the church of St Francis gleamed in the morning sun, and for the first time since the night before we were really warm. The sun caught the white hair of Father Knittel, too, as he came out to welcome his visitors.

Father Carlos Knittel is half German, half Dutch and all hospitality.

A morning call? Nonsense! We were not going back to that cold hotel down in the valley. We were, naturally, his guests. He had all too few. He had a room ready for us because he had heard we were coming up this way, and what was a guest room for if not to be used? His sister, who had come down from the United States to keep house for him, added her reassurances. Of course we were to stay, and as long as we could. Why else had she put clean linen on the guest beds? And she was already baking an apple pie for dinner. We gave in when we heard that.

By the time we had unpacked and drunk a small glass of Holland gin and bitters to take the fog out of our bones the clouds below had dissolved and we could see why San Francisco El Alto has its reputation for beauty.

From the little plaza you can look down on the whole Valley of San Cristóbal. Down there somewhere was the warm-water *pila* where we had photographed our little Petrona the day before. A cluster of white houses peeping round from behind a smallish hill was Totonicapán. The Río Samalá wound through the valley, losing itself over behind a ridge, and up where the mountains came together

again was Quezaltenango, looking as though it were right at the foot of Santa María though there is really a whole range of low hills in between the city and the volcano. All round us the mountain top was green with oak and sweet smelling pines, and the sun shone strongly though there was a cool breeze that kept us from feeling it. We walked with Father Knittel while he showed us the reconstruction work he was doing to make his old *convento* more habitable, and the new terrace of flat stone that his Indians were building in front of the church itself. In the sacristy we examined the old mural paintings that Father Knittel had uncovered, peeling off layer after layer of the whitewash that has accumulated through the centuries and laying bare the rusty reds and warm blues in which some earnest priest or Indian convert had wrought to paint his church brightly for the greater glory of God. The whole interior is painted, but Father Knittel has restored only the sacristy; after all, the whitewash is a good preservative, and the worshippers' candle-smoke would damage the church walls beyond repair if they were uncovered now. A transparent varnish might save the colors, but so much varnish would cost a lot of money, and San Francisco El Alto is hardly a rich enough parish to run to that. While we were looking at the paintings an elderly Indian came in for last minute messages before starting out for Momostenango where Father Francisco Knittel, Father Carlos' brother, has his church. He was given a letter announcing our arrival for the market next day. So you are passed from hand to friendly hand in this hospitable country of The Highlands.

Momostenango is noted for its blankets woven of wool in the old patterns of black and blue and red and gray, and when we tooted our way into the crowded market place our greatest problem was to avoid the acres of them spread out on the cobbles in the mountain sun.

Father Francisco was busy with services but his majordomo knew we were coming and made us welcome in the study where we inhaled the clean fragrance of the pine-needles on the floor and amused ourselves with books and pictures until church was over. Then Father Francisco bustled in, produced glasses of Spanish sherry and small sweet cakes, asked about his brother and sister and energetically hauled us out to look at his market. Momostenango, after all, was famous everywhere for its fine wool, and these blankets, we must understand, were the very best blankets in Central America, though of course some were better than others. It was a pity, too, that Don Ernesto Lange was not at home. There was a man who knew more than anyone about the Indians hereabouts, and always glad to see visitors and tell them what he knew. But at least he, Father Francisco, could guide us through the town.

We strolled about with him, interrupted at almost every step by Indians who came up bowing their heads for his blessing. Here the Indians are much less-self-conscious than in Chichicastenango for example, perhaps because they have not been so stared at by tourists. None refused to be photographed; instead of scowls there were smiles at the camera. One vendor of *brasil*-wood even held up his scales

and weighed out some of his stock for us as he told how he came every market day more than thirty miles over the hills with his burden of dye-wood fragments on his back and sold them for a profit of almost a whole *quetzal*—one dollar American—for the trip if he was lucky. He demonstrated, too, how it was possible to control the scale secretly with the little finger, but hastened to explain that only a rascal, a *pícaro,* would do such a thing. It is in this district, round about Momostenango, that the Indians, good Catholics as they are in their way, worship also an abstract deity, *Dios Mundo,* the World God, and get most of their advice about household affairs from the *brujos* or witch-doctors. There are *brujos* everywhere in Guatemala, but in and near Momostenango there are said to be nearly four hundred of them practicing their rites, tossing out their handfuls of pebbles and beans on the ground to see whether the signs are favorable for planting, for marrying, for going on a journey.

However, it is not for blankets or *brujos* that we remember Momostenango best, but for the story of the Great Baptism, which Father Francisco told us with many a chuckle.

That was the time a Baptist missionary made, as he thought, a miraculous success. Nearly two hundred Indians listened to him, saw the error of their previous idolatrous ways and came to the al fresco turkey dinner and to be solemnly immersed in the little stream at the foot of the hill. No question about it, such a wholesale conversion was a matter for rejoicing. Candles and plaster saints and in-

cense indeed! It was plain that when the thing was put properly to him, even the poor Indian could see that God must be worshipped otherwise. Now there would have to be more benches made for the Baptist Mission, and carpenters worked busily all week. But when the next Sunday came the shiny new benches were empty. The carpenters had been paid, and even they were not there. The word had gone round that the turkey and the exciting plunge in the pool only happened once.

All the Indians were back in their own interesting church, where candles burned brightly every Sunday and the rich, satisfying clouds of incense rose before the gaily painted saints.

Back in San Francisco El Alto for the night we found ourselves wakeful when Father Carlos and his sister were ready for bed. It was that wakefulness that led us to discover a fascinating book. We picked it up to glance idly through it and found that we simply could not put it down, try as we might. Without plot in the ordinary sense, it had yet a sort of plot of its own, a kind of life that led us on from page to page, wondering what on earth was coming next, rewarding us always with some new and unexpected involvement, some climax great or small that we could not possibly have foreseen.

The author of it was one Henry Meyer. His book was published more than a quarter of a century ago in Spain, in Barcelona to be exact. Its title, put in the form of a question to which the author must have supposed there could be only

one answer, was "Would You Like to Learn English Without a Teacher?"

There are, of course, many books of this general sort, though these days we have grown more sophisticated; no modern author would presume upon the public's desire to learn anything. Today's Henry Meyer would have called his book resonantly "Wake Up and Learn English!", or "Life Begins When You Know English!", or at the very least "How to Win Friends by Learning English". Yet we have language methods still with us, though they are differently dressed. The longing to know another tongue than one's own persists. And so this text by Henry Meyer is not, in principle, strange. It attracted clients, in its day, by its plan, its scheme, its manner of teaching. And that manner, that plan, was the whole reason why we could not stop reading it.

The Method Meyer is phonetic. The grammar, so Mr Meyer implies, is simple. It is not there that the pitfalls of English are to be found. The student may acquire a good foundation very simply, by a little hard work. But the pronunciation—ah, that is different! There is where the trouble lies. Yet the Method Meyer can and will help. And it does.

There is, for instance, Exercise Twelve. Herr Meyer leads here with a very personal question; "Juea du yu bay yu clous?" Perhaps you do not know the counter to that one, but the author has it ready for you. "Ay hev bot dem in Landan," answers the pupil, and honors are even. Nor does Mr Meyer confine his phonetics to men's wear. Example

Twenty-Eight, to choose at random, includes the ladies too. Says the teacher, "Di uan in di juait dres is veri yank." The answer to that one is obvious, of course: "Di uan in di blak dres is veri ould." Even up again, master and pupil join in the remark, "Yu aa rait!" So ends that lesson.

We leafed through the pages rapidly, encountering one set of new circumstances after another. "Uil you du mi a feiva?" asks the student. "Juay not?" says the master succinctly, "Ai uil if ai ken." Nothing could be fairer than that. It is hardly necessary for him to add, "Ai uil du it dchast tu plis yu"; somehow you know anyway that he is uiling tu plis.

However, the real surprise of the book is in the appendix, which is one of Herr Meyer's proudest boasts. In it are all kinds of odds and ends and bits of material on which the student who has really begun to Learn English without a Teacher may practice his expertness.

There are four pages of Bacon's Apothegms (Lood Beikans Apozems). Two pages are filled with fragments of useful information of a general nature, such as that Christopher Columbus married an Italian lady named Felippa de Perestrello (followed by the pungent note that marriage is not reflexive in English), that Washington Irving was once Ambassador to Spain (without mention of "The Alhambra"—perhaps because Irving was merely an American), and that Napoleon Bonaparte died, a prisoner of the English, on a rocky island in the middle of the southern Atlantic.

And then, at the very end, we found the real jewel, the

Soliloquy of Hamlet, Principe de Dinamarca, which Mr Meyer assures his students is "one of the most popular of the Shakespearean works." We wondered about the Spanish for "fardels" and learned that *molestas cargas* was the nearest equivalent the author could find. "Ay, there's the rub!" was rendered in rather matter-of-fact fashion, we thought, by *"Ahí, está la dificultad!"* but after all not every translator should be expected to keep up with the Bard. All in all, though, the Soliloquy suffered less than you might think. The essential nobility, the near-madness of the lines —these remain. Perhaps, in the Spanish rendering, some of them are even more effective. For ourselves, we shall never hear or read the Soliloquy again without recalling its very first words as Mr Meyer has set them over into his students' own speech. *"Ser ó no ser,"* says the unfortunate Principe de Dinamarca, *"Este es el problema!"* There is a ring of truth and of despair to the world *problema* that the Shakespearian "question" does not begin to equal.

One of the highland villages we wanted to visit was San Pedro Sacatépequez, a town noted for the excellence of its hand-woven textiles. Together with its neighbor, San Marcos (they are really almost the same town), it is one of the centers for beautifully designed *huipiles,* skirts and woven cloth of almost every sort. All this weaving is for trade purposes; most of the women make their own clothes and some of their husbands', but those are for use and not for sale. Nevertheless the work is so finely done and so brilliant in color and pattern, as we had seen in the city shops, that we

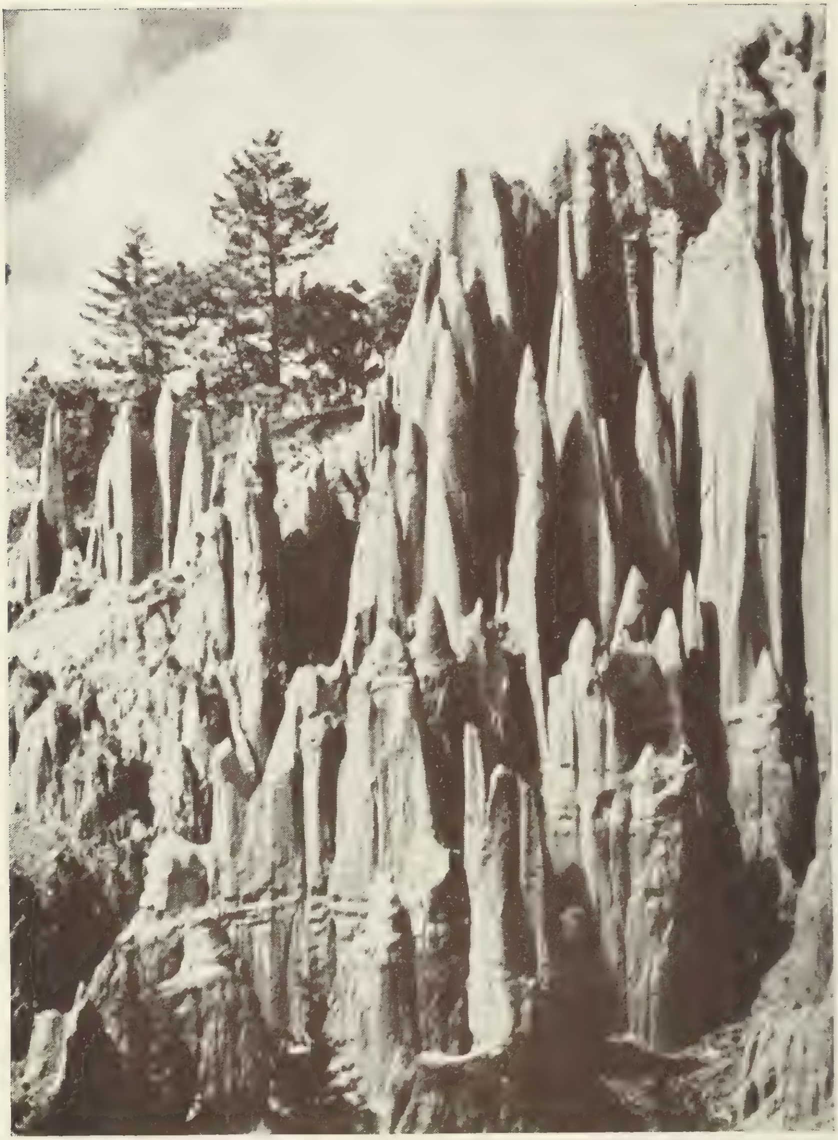
NOT FAR FROM SANTA MARÍA VOLCANO, THIS PUBLIC WASHING-PLACE HAS NATURAL WARM WATER.

PETRONA, FIFTEEN YEARS OLD, STOPPED WORK TO SMILE WHEN WE TOLD HER SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL.

THE HIGHLAND INDIANS CULTIVATE THE HILLSIDES CAREFULLY FOR THEIR CORN CROP.

MARKET AT SAN FRANCISCO EL ALTO, BURNED BY THE SUN, WHIPPED BY THE WIND.

THIS SHREWD OLD WOMAN SAID WE MIGHT TAKE HER PICTURE BUT SHE CERTAINLY WOULD NOT PAY FOR IT.



THE "RISCOS," NEAR MOMOSTENANGO. WASHED OUT BY THE RAINS, THE FORMATIONS ARE LIKE OUR OWN BRYCE CANYON.

WARM MILK WITH A LITTLE COOKED RICE IN IT ALWAYS FINDS CUSTOMERS ON MARKET DAY.

BRAZIL WOOD, FROM WHICH ORANGE-RED DYE IS MADE, SELLS BY WEIGHT.

AT EACH CHURCH DOOR THE SELLER OF CANDLES WAITS FOR THE WORSHIPER, WHO IS SURE TO BUY.

A QUEZALTENANGO WOMAN, STOCK, SCALES, AND SMILE ALL READY FOR CUSTOMERS.

THE PUBLIC FOUNTAIN OF SALCAJÁ LOOKS FAR TOO CLASSIC
FOR A MERE OUTDOOR LAUNDRY.

TILLING THE SOIL AT ZACULEU PYRAMID WITH THE SAME TYPE OF WOODEN PLOW HIS ANCESTORS USED.

GUATEMALA'S MOUNTAIN VILLAGES SUGGEST THE SIMPLE PEACE OF OLD TESTAMENT TIMES AND PLACES.

GRINDING CORN ON THE STONE "METATE" IN THE SAME OLD-FASHIONED WAY HER GRANDMOTHER DID IT.

THE BEST COOK IN HER VILLAGE STEPPED OUTSIDE A MOMENT BUT THOUGHT PICTURE-TAKING FOOLISH.

BURDENS BORNE ON THE HEAD GIVE THE INDIAN GIRLS A FINE, UPRIGHT CARRIAGE.

wanted to look at some of it in its own habitat. Also, we wanted to make a loop of half an hour or so, just to pass through the village of San Martín Chile Verde, where the Indians are a foot taller on the average and wear costumes astonishingly out of the ordinary. At least so we had been told. We were, in fact, growing a bit suspicious about the whole thing. Our map said nothing about any town called St Martin of the Green Chile (a better map has just been finished by the government), and so many people had told us we ought to go there that we had begun to wonder. Maybe we were being sent for a bucket of steam or a left-handed monkey-wrench or something like that. Yet it was supposed to be just off the main highway, and Federico told us he knew just how to find it, so we included it in our plans for the day's run. We would find out whether they really grew green chiles there or know the reason why.

In December Quezaltenango is admittedly not at its best. It is cold, but not quite cold enough for snow, so the whole Valley of San Cristóbal takes it out in fog.

This was a foggy morning. Federico piloted the car cautiously down through the town, tooting respectfully at all corners, waiting properly for signals to proceed and informing the policeman on the outskirts that we were going to San Pedro and San Marcos, that we were interested in *turismo* and nothing else, that we would be back again that evening. It was very early, but Indians were about; they are on the move day and night. As we slid out of the town limits we met them coming in to market with their *cacastes* —something like chests of drawers without the drawers—

on their backs; with immense loads of pottery, with baskets, bundles of corn-husks, blankets, all the thousand and one articles that Indians bring to town. From all of them the cold fog dripped; every load gleamed wetly in the queer pearly light that sifted through the mist. The mules took it bravely, such as we saw, but the bony mongrel dogs crawled along, their tails between their legs, growling in their throats at the damp that soaked their loose hides. Federico tried to cheer us by saying that this was only temporary. We would start climbing soon and we would find ourselves above it all, dry and in the sun.

Federico knew his road better than his weather. We did go up, indefinitely it seemed, but we only exchanged fog for clouds. Then the clouds became actual rain; not a downpour but a steady drizzle, thick and cold. Yet it was worth it to watch the banks of cloud swirling down the green *barrancas,* rising ahead of us so that we had to slow down to a snail's pace before we dared drive into them, clearing suddenly to give us glimpses of sun or rainbow, thickening again to a dead, impenetrable wall. Once, at the bottom of a long grade, the fog cleared entirely to show us the village of San Antonio Sacatépequez, with its pink-and-blue church and tiny park with walks laid out in neat rows of rock chunks set in cement. Dismounting to limber her knees, C. fell into conversation with a little group of school-children who lent her their books to see if she could read them and giggled exactly like children anywhere when she mispronounced a word. But as we climbed out of the small valley the mist closed in and we were riding through

the clouds again, detached, alone, creatures of the fog itself, our car dripping in rhythm with the trees, our Federico unconsciously justifying his nickname of *Pajarillo* by singing softly to himself as he drove.

That ride will always be associated in our minds with music. Federico sang *Hechicera,* "The Enchantress," and *Inquietud* and *Marimba,* and when we asked for something a bit livelier, gave us *Mamá Ynez* which is an insinuating rhumba. We dove into cloud banks and out of them to the tune of *Rancho Grande;* we ground uphill to the interminable complaining wail of *Cuatro Milpas* and we slid down again to Irving Berlin's "Alone," done into Spanish. After a while we got into the spirit of the thing and offered to sing some of the music from "Follow the Fleet," but Federico was away ahead of us; he knew the tunes and the words too. Together we adapted Fred Astaire's song, changing it to "And what did we see? We saw the fog!" I remember that we had lunch in San Marcos, with fine steaming black-bean soup and a haberdashery shop next to the hotel which proclaimed itself in bold letters as "The Store of the American Gentleman." In San Pedro, C. had the time of her life haggling with the merchant who must have had some Mexican blood in him for he enjoyed every minute of the bargaining. The shelves of his shop carried more beautiful weaves and more bright color to the square foot than either of us had ever seen anywhere, and we came away loaded with textiles of a dozen kinds; blouses, tablecloths, hangings, yard-goods of rich maroon and yellow and blue, belts, sashes, head-bands—there was

no end to them. Afterwards C. figured that everything totaled up to thirty-seven per cent less than she had been asked in the first place, but her mathematics were too abstruse for me.

And San Martín Chile Verde? Well, that is the skeleton in the closet. The fog was just too much for Federico. I know now that there is such a place. There must be, for the Guatemala Album which is not given to practical jokes contains two pictures of the Indians from that village, tall and serious in their odd dark costume that must have been derived from the robes of the old friars their forefathers admired. But we did not find it. Half a dozen times Federico thought we were right at it. Then, when we stopped to ask an Indian we were always somewhere else. We found ourselves in San Juan Ostuncalco, I recall, and in Concepción and San Mateo and several other villages. But no San Martín Chile Verde. It will remain our Carcassonne, the remote, unattainable place of beauty we shall never see. It is really a pity it has not a more poetic name.

Back in Quezaltenango we found more pleasant quarters in a hotel to which Father Knittel had sent us. "Why, of course you could not like that Herr Knoke's hotel," he had said in astonishment. "The man has no manners!" But there was another one, less pretentious but far more comfortable, run by a certain Herr Brandenburg whose wife knew how to make magnificent liver-sausage and who would give us every attention. He would see to it that Herr Brandenburg knew we were coming. Besides, on the next

day, which was Christmas, we were all to drive out to the village of Huitán, away up in the hills to the northeast, where Father Knittel had promised to say a Christmas mass for Indians. They had been after him for years to come out there, and he had always answered that when they fixed up a road over which he could drive his little German car, then he would go. Now they had done it. All year they had been sending in messages every week or two that the road was coming along well, and that the *padre* was expected. And Father Knittel had asked us to come along. No tourists had ever gone to Huitán; until now, the only way was by horseback over a long and difficult trail. We would be the very first North Americans to see the dances there. We would send a message and they would be expecting us. It was all arranged. We would have to get up at five in the morning, because he wanted to be in Huitán by eight o'clock. But we would sleep so well at Herr Brandenburg's hotel that getting up would not be difficult. That was all arranged, too.

Everything, in fact, was arranged. Everything, that is, but a bath. Herr Brandenburg's bathing facilities were sketchy in the extreme, especially in the matter of hot water. We took Federico into our confidence. Hadn't we heard about some famous natural hot baths at Almolonga and at Aguas Amargas? How far away were they? Couldn't we go out to one of them?

We could and would. Indeed, he had been planning to go to Almolonga himself as soon as we were through with him. Aguas Amargas was a little too far, and not well

arranged for evening bathing. But at Almolonga there were fine buildings and every comfort. He, Federico, would see that the whole affair was made easy. And if we did not need him after dinner he would be glad. There was in Quezaltenango a certain young lady he knew, and at her house there was to be a party that night—a Christmas Eve dance with a supper of sweet *tamales* and coffee at midnight and fine music and dancing. If we didn't mind? We did not mind. Federico was not going to Huitán with us next day. Father Knittel's small car would hold only four and his sister was coming with us. Therefore we could all go bathing and then Federico might do as he pleased for the next twenty-four hours. I thought about the fiancée of whom he had told us but C., who knew what was in my mind, kicked my ankle and I said nothing. A chauffeur, no less than a sailor, should have the privileges of his profession.

The baths at Almolonga are, like so many other things in Guatemala, relics of former splendor, a trifle shabby, suggesting a magnificence that has worn thin. A boy led us down the long corridor, handed us soap and towels and opened a door. That was when we got our surprise. Somehow we had thought vaguely of rooms with tubs in them, probably faucets from which the hot volcanic waters would run when we turned them on. What we saw was a room that was in itself a tub. It was tiled from ceiling to floor. One third of the space was for undressing and dressing; there was a bench and a small movable duck-walk of wooden slats and there were hooks for clothing. The other two-thirds

of the space was the bath, an immense sunken affair, also tiled and with broad steps leading down into the rising steam. From a huge spout in the wall poured the water so conveniently heated in the bowels of the earth and somewhere below was a drain which carried it out at exactly the same rate at which it entered. Floodlight the room and decorate it a little in the modern manner and you would have a Cecil B. DeMille dream.

We chose a bath perhaps eighteen feet long by twelve wide and two feet deep. Federico took the one next door. Singing in the bath must be a universal urge, not something confined exclusively to Anglo-Saxons, for soon we heard his voice raised in melody. As a matter of fact, we were moved to music ourselves. Federico was staying pretty well on key for once, and as we soaped and sloshed and floated and turned shrimp-pink in the glorious heat we joined him. Outside in the roofed-over common baths reserved for the Indians, the little dark men and women busily removing the dust in celebration of Christmas must have wondered at the strange North American sounds. Though not for long, probably. The Indian has his own thoughts, and whatever they are they won't be what the white man might guess.

Afterward we had a *rompopo,* a drink you almost have to eat, made of rum, beaten egg and far too much sugar, and drove back to the hotel through the nippy evening air in a fine warm glow. After such a boiling-out it was inconceivable that we should ever be cold again. Herr Brandenburg had done something special for us in the way of Christmas dinner; a boiled turkey (a bit on the slippery

side) and excellent cheese cake and coffee to follow. He was sorry for us, too, so far from home on this of all evenings, and he invited us into his own *sala* to sit while he and his family had their own dinner. There we sat and looked at the picture of Adolf Hitler enshrined in pine boughs on the wall and listened to the radio. We should have let the thing alone; it was delivering a snappy Mexican program and the guitars were foreign enough not to remind us too much of the season. But no; we had to fiddle with the knobs. What we got served us right. It was a short-wave broadcast from Schenectady, built around Christmas Eve. When the announcer talked about getting the ornaments and lights on the tree and about the presents in the morning, I thought I heard C. sniffle but I steadfastly looked the other way. After all, sentimental or not, Christmas is Christmas, and though two of us were here the third was two thousand miles away in California. Two thousand miles is a good long way when the third of a trio is only nine years old. Then a contralto began to sing "Silent Night" and C. said through her handkerchief, "Oh, turn the d-d-darn thing off!" I snapped the switch and went out to the kitchen to see about early breakfast. Even if there wouldn't be anyone to shout "Merry Christmas!" at us in the morning, we couldn't very well start off for Huitán on empty stomachs.

X

THE drive to Huitán was an experience in itself.

Father Knittel's pocket-edition German car was easy on gasoline but that was its only real virtue; it picked up speed fairly well on level road but on the hills it lagged sadly, and this trip was all hills. Because I had no driver's license for Guatemala the *padre* thought he had better sit at the wheel until we were out of the Quezaltenango city limits, and that ride with him through the dim, foggy five-o'clock-in-the-morning streets was something to remember. Father Knittel is a charming and generous host, but he is the type of driver whose foot freezes to the accelerator pedal in moments of stress. We dashed round corners and up one-way alleys in the wrong direction; when we did manage to stop we were almost thrown from our seat by the violence of his attack on the brake. Once we cut clear across a corner curbstone; fortunately there was no policeman

abroad so early. Out near Olintepeque, which is practically a part of the city, there is a long narrow bridge, and that nearly finished the whole expedition then and there. We entered one end of it just as a dozen Indians with their pigs, dogs and turkeys came in at the other. What they were doing or where they were going at that hour we did not know, but Father Knittel chose that moment to come down hard on the gas, probably with some confused conviction that if he could only get across fast enough there would be less danger of hitting anything. The Indians scattered, two of them climbing the rail, the others flattening themselves against it. Happily the pigs were in single file and over at one side; they never knew how close they came to destruction as they trotted past. But how the turkeys and dogs survived I shall never understand. They were all around us and I am quite sure under us, barking and squawking and beating hollowly against the fenders as we shooshed through them at forty miles an hour, the loose bridge-planks roaring like thunder and the dust swirling up in our wake, a cloud of brimstone and sulphur marking the passage of the Devil himself. Yet they all lived. Before we hurtled round the next corner C. looked back. The dust was settling. The two wise Indians had clambered down from the railing. Pigs, dogs, Indians and turkeys had all formed again into their little procession and were jogging on their way just as if death had not missed them by inches. Self-control? Maybe. Probably, though, it was mere indifference. The white man is mad anyhow, and one manifestation of his lunacy is no more startling than another.

At the outskirts of Olintepeque Father Knittel relinquished the wheel. He would be glad, he said, to have me drive. That way he might save his strength for the services later. It was fortunate that he did not pilot us over that road. The government had had no hand in this new trail to Huitán; the Indians of the village had built it in their own time for their priest. So no knowledge of modern roadbuilding had gone into it. The Indians had simply widened their horse-man-and-mule trail, smoothed it a trifle and filled in the worst holes. The technique of the thing was entirely beyond them; indeed I am certain it had never occurred to them that there might be any special technique about it at all. For instance, whenever the road turned to switchback and climb up the mountain they had padded it with nice soft earth on the curve so that it might be easy on the Father's car. That this removed all chances for effective traction was something they just didn't know about. Four times everyone had to get out while I eased the car back and went at those turns again, skidding in the loose dirt, the motor of the Opel racing horridly. Once we had to inch round a bend with the wheels on one side less than a foot from the crumbly edge of the abyss; a boulder in the center of the trail had been too large for the Huitaños to move so they had just left it there. We shuddered to think what might have happened if Father Knittel had been driving, had seen that rock looming ahead and, in his customary reaction to surprise, stepped on the gas.

There were two hours of it or so, the sun beginning to warm us a little as it rose, the clouds thinning out as the

morning grew older. Then the village came into sight, at the very bottom of a hill that seemed to descend forever. These are man-sized mountains in Guatemala; the village of Huitán, away down there at the bottom of the grade, was still 7000 feet up. Far in the distance we could see the faint purple of the Cuchumatanes, the mountain range that marks the Mexican border. As we crawled down the interminable hill the sound of drums came up to us from below. Huitán was wide awake and ready for us.

Coming into the village was like stepping into a new and incredibly bizarre world of color and sound. How long those Indians had been up and about we couldn't guess; perhaps they had not slept at all. The moment we reached the edge of town we saw that there was a committee waiting to receive us. There were maybe twenty or thirty men in the group (women do not take part in the ceremonial dances) and all were in costume, the brilliant magentas and reds and yellows that are the traditional dress for the Dance of the Conquistadores in which the Indian, masked and decorated within an inch of his life, celebrates his ancestors' downfall at the hands of Alvarado and his company of gentlemen adventurers. With the group were the fife and drum necessary for the dance, piper and drummer already whistling and thumping in the half-trance induced by the hypnotic syncopation of their music.

At their head was the Indian *alcalde* of the town who pressed up to the side of the car, removed his mask and headdress and bent his neck for the blessing of the *padre*.

Then he produced a small bunch of red mallow-blossoms interspersed with wilted daisies, handed them ceremoniously to Father Knittel and gave us our instructions. He and his group would escort us to the *convento* which was prepared for our arrival. We were please to stay behind them as they danced us in.

It took a lot of starting and stopping in low gear but we managed it. Ahead of us the grotesque, bright velvets and spangles swayed from one side of the road to the other to the nasal piping and the heavy beat of the drum. The Indian does not leap as he dances, nor does he indulge in any variations at all from the time-honored standard practice. His dance is a sort of pawing, hesitating two-step, performed mechanically, as though the dancer was thinking of something else entirely. It is done, of course, without a partner, since it is in no way a social function in the sense of our dancing but a strictly conventionalized ritual expression.

Our bodyguard shook rattles made of gourds filled with pebbles and gaily painted. The drum beat steadily and the fife ran up and down its scale of five harsh notes as the maskers shuffled along and the villagers came out of their houses to watch us go by. I had no silk hat to doff and there was no ticker-tape floating in the air, but otherwise the effect was very much like that of an official Welcome to the City of New York; the gestures were different but the spirit was the same. Then we were at the driveway leading into the yard of the *convento* attached to the tiny church. Lined up ahead of us were at least sixty more men, all costumed,

all shaking rattles. Their pink-and-gold falsefaces leered at us as they waved to the left where a pathway of new pine-needles led our car to its stall behind the church. The guard of honor did not come in; its members joined the larger group and immediately began warming up for the real show, with two more drums, another fife and a *marimba*. As for us, we were taken in tow by the *alguazil,* assistant to the *alcalde,* a brawny young Indian with a green handkerchief tied pirate-fashion round his head, who showed us into the temporary quarters that had been made ready. The room was really the sacristy of the church, but that was all right. They knew that we were bringing our own food; the *padre* had sent word ahead. So they were all prepared. There were two benches and a table covered with a clean cloth. On it stood a bottle of milk with a corn-cob stopper. Beside it was a jar of water and the floor was covered with pine boughs. Nothing they could think of had been left undone. Indeed, their admirable discretion had extended to even greater lengths. A small trail of the green needles led out the door and across the yard. As a one-time farm boy, I had no trouble identifying the tiny building at which it ended. And I shall never cease to marvel at the delicacy that animated those simple, friendly Indians in their little hidden village. No expert Official Greeter, not even Raleigh with his coat in a puddle for his Queen, could show greater tact than that.

We spread out our bundles and unwrapped them—hard-boiled eggs, liver-sausage sandwiches put up for us by Herr Brandenburg, a thermos of hot coffee. Fräulein Knittel

produced a potato salad and a shining round mold of chicken in aspic while we held our breaths and marveled. She had a cake, too, with nuts and citron and raisins in true Christmas style. We didn't touch the Indians' milk or water; appreciative as we were of the kind thought, we had no mind to risk the bugs that doubtless lurked in them. But with our coffee and Fräulein Knittel's bottles of water—boiled *and* filtered—we were well fixed. By the time Father Knittel had wriggled himself into his robes and made ready for the church services we were already under way with our second breakfast. The *alguazil* with the green kerchief never left us, though. We were his charges; he was responsible. The rest of the people might pack the church if they liked; he was going to stay and see that things were all right. There was an echo of the old Spanish grandiloquence about his reply when we asked him how long the dancing would last. "As long," he said, "as you would like. . . . Naturally." We learned later that they were going to dance all day and all the night too, as a matter of course. But that did not rob his answer of its essential graciousness. Not only his house but his village and his people were ours.

When the services were over and Father Knittel had had a chance to eat a combined breakfast and lunch, the Dance of the Conquistadores really began.

There were two groups of the fantastic maskers, one representing obviously the more important figures in the Conquest (Alvarado and his officers, perhaps) and the others acting as a sort of pantomimic Greek chorus. The

leaders, who danced by themselves in a rudely formed ring, wore purple and green plush breeches, bright red and gold jackets, and long yellow cloaks. Their brown legs were covered with pink cotton tights, very wrinkled, and they wore shoes that must have tortured their unaccustomed feet. The headdress included wigs, whose long curls hung down to their shoulders; red curls, most of them, because of Alvarado's legendary blondness. Over their faces they wore ridiculously small masks, pink and white with gilded moustaches and beards, and in their hands they carried property swords of iron. Some waved scraps of lace or tucked them in their sleeves; even that little remembrance of the dandies of the 17th century had not been entirely lost. There was a *marimba* humming over in the shade of a large *ceiba* tree, but these men paid no attention to it; they danced to their own fife and drum, directly in front of the church steps. Now and then, while the rest went on with their round-and-round shuffle, one would advance into the center of the ring, brandish his sword and declaim a long speech, loudly and urgently so that it might be heard over the drumming. The words were not Spanish—at least not any Spanish that either Father Knittel or I could make out. They may have been in one of the Indian tongues, though the sound was not the same as the odd, clicking Quiché syllables which are like a mixture of German and Kaffir. Or perhaps the whole thing was pure gibberish, an eeny-meeny-miney-mo that had come down through the centuries as a child's nonsense is handed on from one to the next. At any rate, it never lasted more than a minute or two. Then the

orator was back with others, shuffling round to the drum-beat, slowly revolving on his own axis as well as on the larger axis common to the group. This went on without end, proceeding after its own fashion, according to some pattern we could not fathom. Quiet dancing; then the sudden interruption and the fiercely shouted speech; then quiet again and the regular shuffle-and-turn until the next speech; all to the *tom-tom-tom* of the drum and the screaming improvisation of the *chirimilla.* What it meant exactly, probably even the Indians did not know. But it is their traditional dance and they dance it, paying good round fees for the rental of the costumes they must wear because it is *costumbre*—the custom.

Over beyond the corner of the church the *marimba* was playing for the other group, a simple tune something like part of a hymn we could not quite remember, repetitious like all the *marimba* melodies. Beside it stood another, unused at the moment, the little sticks lying carelessly across the wooden sounding-bars. Our friend the *alguazil* explained that there were originally ten *marimberos,* enough to play both instruments properly, but that the rest were not feeling well today. I made the cup-tipping gesture that is instantly understood in all Spanish countries and he grinned and said *"Cómo no!"* After all, the *fiesta* had begun the day before, and to have any musicians able to function on the morning after was not doing so badly.

The men dancing to the *marimba* looked at first much like those before the church steps. They also were brilliant in yellow and purple and red velvet; the same shuffling

hitch-and-two-step characterized the dancing. But here were no cloaked and armed gentlemen. These were probably ordinary soldiers—conquerors, yes, but not with quite the flourish of the genuine, dyed-in-the-wool Child of the Sun, Alvarado. Their dance was different, too, and somehow curiously familiar, like something we had known all our lives. We puzzled over that. Why should a fantastic dance, performed by thirty or forty little brown men in a mountain village in Central America seem to carry us back so forcibly to our childhood, seem so accustomed and so friendly a rite? Then we saw it. All this was nothing more nor less than a variation on the old square-dances. Two lines faced each other, eight or nine feet apart. Each row shook its curled and feathered wigs at the other, rattled its painted gourds across the space between, swayed forward and then back again to the accented rhythm of the *marimba.* From the two diagonally opposite corners the maskers detached themselves, shuffled to the center, solemnly circled each other *dos-a-dos,* repeated that in reverse and danced back to their corners. Then the two from the other corners did the same thing. Of course! No wonder it had seemed familiar. The other figures had been lost somewhere along the centuries, but they had one of their own which consisted of the *torito*—the "little bull" which was a small boy complete with horned mask and highly ornamented cape (bull and matador in one)—rushing into the space between the lines and threatening the dancers with lowered head. The audience laughed delightedly when this happened, but the dance did not change or stop; the shuffling went on and

another pair performed the solemn back-to-back in the center, that was all. We felt that if they could only understand us we would like to call some new figures for them, say from a platform up in the tree somewhere. A dash of "Swing your partners!" would have helped.

But it was exotic and fantastic enough just as it was. We asked our *alguazil* whether the costumes were made here in the village but he said no, the town was not large enough to support a tailor; they rented them all down in San Cristóbal where there was a man who made a business of supplying the villages of the whole area with the right dress for each dance. We asked about the skyrockets, too, reminded by a blast and a swoosh-bang behind us. Perhaps the knowledge of rocket-making had spread over here in the old days of Santos Pérez, whose memory was celebrated down in Chichicastenango in the image of little Tzicolaj, riding up and down on his rope to the church towers. But no. They bought their rockets in Quezaltenango; a dollar a dozen they cost. From those two items of information you may see just how much the Indian thinks of his *fiestas*. Costumes and rockets must have cost a pretty penny. So must the quantity of *aguardiente* consumed in the space of a few days by a crowd that considers that fiery brandy an essential part of any feast. Yet, poor as the village was, it could manage to squeeze out the cash for this party.

We took photographs from one end of the plaza to the other. Under Father Knittel's eagle eye no one dared suggest that our camera might snare his soul; that would be rank heresy and foul superstition, and this was a Christian

village. The *torito* posed for us politely, both back and front in order to show the finely embroidered cape of which he was inordinately proud. Two buxom girls, one coy and the other rather pleased about it, stood side by side while we snapped them so that we might have a record of the Huitán costume which runs to stripes—long skirt, *huipil* in horizontal striping, a red and white sash in finely woven lines and headcloth in bolder ones, red, green and yellow on a white ground. They wore the old coin necklaces, too, with bits of coral separating the silver pieces; so far the tinsel beads from Middle Europe have not found their way to this small place. Over by the corner of one of the *cofradía* houses an old woman was pouring milk from one jar into another; in the strong sun the white plaster walls of the building and the earthenware jars made an almost Biblical picture of simplicity and peace. Beside her on the ground sat an old couple, toothless and grizzled, refreshing themselves from a jug after their toilsome journey over the hills to attend the Christmas feast. We snapped them too, the old woman looking very severe, the man shrewdly using the pose as an excuse to tip the bottle for another drink.

And so at last it was time to go. We said good-bye to our friend the *alguazil* who had taken such pains to see that we had a good time, presenting him with a package of American cigarettes and a bromo-seltzer bottle that had found its way into our baggage. It is hard to tell which he liked better; neither cigarettes nor glass containers are available up here in the remote hills, and both would cost more than he could afford even if they could be had. The

dancing did not stop, although some of the men fell out long enough to come over and say good-bye and get the *padre's* farewell blessing. An ancient crone, her eyes too far gone to be much use, snatched off her headcloth and bowed before me also; probably I was another priest and two blessings were better than one. I tapped her skull and muttered, though lacking the words of a proper blessing I could only say *"Buenas tardes!"* Still, it was better than nothing at all. Better to deceive an old woman than to let her think a priest refused to bless her. Then we were in the car with the remains of our lunch and ready to go. The dancers kept doggedly at their business, but the road was lined with women and children shouting their farewells and waving to us with that odd gesture of the palm upward and the fingers curling toward the waver in a come-hither manner that just doesn't mean good-bye to the North American. The last thing we saw was the dazzling green of the *alguazil's* head-kerchief at the gate, and behind him one of the curly-wigged *conquistadores* declaiming his speech and waving his rusty iron sword as we turned out of the pine-needle path and toward the mountain. Our Christmas was over.

There are in The Highlands two remains of the old Maya-Quiché civilization well worth seeing. One is near Huehuetenango—Place of the Olds (old things, or old people?)—where the ruins of Zaculeu rise starkly from their lonely and wind-swept little plain. The other is beside Santa Cruz Quiché, at Utatlán, where the Indian priests

and chiefs plotted to trap Alvarado and his men and burn them alive.

At Zaculeu there is very little beside the single pyramid that marks the old place of worship that was also a fortress. It is in a fairly good state of preservation, though much of the facing of small stones and plaster has tumbled down and lies scattered in the flat fields that surround it. As in other central gathering places the old Maya people chose their site well; from the pyramid you can see for miles to the mountain passes through which any foe might enter, over to the edges of the *barrancas* that protected the stronghold on the other sides. Huehuetenango is high—approaching it you cross a pass 11,000 feet in the air; the Cumbre del Aire, Peak of the Wind. All this upper mountain country is the home of the quetzal, Guatemala's national bird, and we watched anxiously all the way for a glimpse of the bright green plumage and extraordinary long tail-feathers by which it is distinguished. We saw no quetzal, however, nor had Federico ever seen one outside of stuffed specimens in a museum.

Just at the foot of the pyramid was a cornfield, and two Indian boys were turning up the earth with a pair of slow oxen and a wooden plow, cut from a tree-crotch exactly as the Indian cut his plows a thousand years ago. They were shouting *"Oita! Oita!"* Federico didn't know the word but it obviously meant something like "Get going!" for when they wanted to stop the team they yelled "Whoa!" in a tone and accent startlingly like the voice of a plowman on any Middle Western farm. We photographed them against

a raw, cloudy sky with the pyramids silhouetted behind them, lying full-length in a fresh furrow to get the proper angle and disturbing both beasts and boys by our acrobatics. They muttered to each other about the strangers in guttural Quiché, but both were too startled to say anything when C. shouted *"Mik!"* at them as we left. She had picked it up in the market somewhere, talking to the Indian women. The sharp syllable, she informed me with a superior air, is simply a sort of slang style of saying good-bye—"Toodle-oo!" so to speak, or "Ta-ta!"

Down at Utatlán there is no pyramid, only a grass-grown mound or two through which you can still see a few corners of what were once rock walls and foundations. It was at once a fort and a place of worship, a city of straw huts gathered round the tremendous stone structures in which the priests performed the ancient rites and from which the princes of the Quiché nation defied their enemies. On its table-top of land it is ideally situated for defense; gullies surround it and cut it off; sheer cliffs make approach almost impossible. When Alvarado wrote the story of his adventure to Cortéz there was one causeway leading directly to the city, and it was over this that the Spaniards were courteously invited to ride to spend a day and a night with the Indians who said they were glad to see them. Fortunately for him, Alvarado was suspicious; they seemed a little too glad. And when a spy brought him word of the plan to trap and burn his small army, he saw how right he had been to refuse. Always diplomatic, he sent word that he appreciated the kindness of the Quiché people, but that

his horses needed to graze and he would stay out on the prairie-lands, on the other side of the canyons. However, if the kings would be good enough to allow him to entertain them the next day he would be very happy.

They came—to be bound, put through a farce of a trial and burned alive as traitors. By some useful logic the Spaniards were always able to convince themselves that any act of resistance on the part of the peoples they wished to conquer was treachery. Then Alvarado sent for his Cakchiquel allies, some four thousand of them, took the royal city of Utatlán in spite of its moats and walls, burned it and tore down its pagan temples, and founded a new town over on flat ground where his horses and men could charge if they had to. He called it Santa Cruz Quiché, so he wrote to Cortéz, because it was dedicated on Holy Friday.

Today it is hard to realize that these careless heaps of rubble were once the palaces of kings, the mighty fortresses of a powerful nation. We explored the tumbled piles of stone that were once temples, discovered a small cave in which there was an Indian shrine of stone and a wooden cross well blackened with candle smoke, and crawled down the side of a *barranca* to where there was an entrance to the underground galleries with which the hill seems to be honeycombed. Whether these were made so that the priests might appear magically to their awed congregations or as a way of escape has not been determined by the archaeologists so far as I know, though the chances are their purpose was the former, since Alvarado's success seems to indicate that once their gates were stormed the people of Utatlán

were trapped, just as they had hoped to trap the enemy. The tunnels are narrow but very tall, doubtless because there had to be light for the passage through them and the only light the Indian had was a burning torch carried overhead. We walked into one, damp and cold the moment we were ten feet from the entrance, and found a sly-looking *ladino* boy poking about in the clay with a pointed stick. He offered us a little stone image he told us he had dug out of the wall. We said no, explaining that if it was not genuine we didn't want it, and that if it was really old then it belonged to the government and he was breaking the law by offering it to us and perhaps we should report him to the police. The argument stumped him. We even detected a gleam of admiration in Federico's eye at the neat way in which it had left the peddler no possible rebuttal.

The Carnegie people have dug here, but not as much as in the richer fields of the lowlands and jungles in which lie Quiriguá, Copán, the ruins of Chichen-Itzá up in Yucatán. Yet there must be much to learn in these mountains. It is high Guatemala that is preeminently Maya-Quiché land. All the early population movements to the south, from New Mexico down to Peru, seem always to have followed the high country, to have found safety there and gone through their most definite and stable periods of cultural evolution. Dr Edgar L. Hewett, one of the most delightful and readable of writing archaeologists, holds to this view in his "Ancient Life in Mexico and Central America." He says: "The conclusion has been forced upon me, in thirty years of personal observation in Middle America, that the

primeval seat of Maya culture was in the highlands of Guatemala; that it naturally flowed out under the urge of great expectations to the prolific lowland region; that it experienced there, in a favored epoch, the exuberant growth that has often come to a transplanted culture; that with the continual disasters, met with in the newer habitat, there came a sense of defeat, the degeneration that results from a long struggle against relentless misfortune, and then the inevitable drift back again into the upland regions, where life might be normally harder, but free from the losing fight against appalling disasters, such as we know afflicted the later Maya peoples of Yucatán. My advice to prospective field workers in Central America, for years past, has been to go into the most remote districts and communities of the Guatemalan highlands for remains of the oldest Maya culture, for survivals of the old rituals, for clues that may lead to the unraveling of the ancient symbolism, even of the foremost mystery, the hierogylphic writing." And Dr Hewett adds, writing specifically of Utatlán, "My own conclusion is that Utatlán was an exceptionally strong, almost impregnable fortress. This is borne out by a study of the existing mounds that constitute the ruins of the once great Quiché 'capital.' It is one of the most inviting prospects for excavation in all Middle America."

But we were not diggers; we had neither equipment nor knowledge. All we could do was to look, and try to imagine the hordes of busy, probably far happier little brown people that once swarmed over these cliffs, built their houses lightly of grass and their temples and palaces strongly of stone,

honored their chiefs and kings, worshipped and feared their priests and trotted through these long dark tunnels on business that they knew all about and we could only guess. Here they dug the ground with wooden plows like the one we had just seen, probably shouted to their beasts as we had heard the two boys shout, in a tongue we did not know. Here they planted their corn, destroyed the forests for their wood but, because they knew nothing about reforestation, found that they constantly had to move farther and farther from the center. In these temples must have been many of the Maya codices, written on deerskin or on fiber paper folded back and forth like a fan. And here, on steps that have fallen to pieces now—there must have been flights of steps; all these people seem to have felt the need to get their houses of worship nearer to the sky—the same drums sounded, the same bone flutes screamed and wailed as the priests in emerald quetzal-feathers burned their smoky copal incense and told even the kings what they might and might not do.

We had seen today's tribes, many of them, but only as they had been changed, warped, altered by the Conquest. Now we could sit on these ragged rocks and see the Quiché of yesterday; small, tough, earnest about his business, a good craftsman and trader, master of his own unconquerable mountains, protected by his *nahual,* his familiar spirit, so that no harm might come to him, unaware that a Child of the Sun—his own Sun that he worshipped—was even at the moment riding down into *Guatemalan,* Land of Forests, to blow his world to bits.

We heard our last Mayan drum as we got up to leave, a strong muted throbbing coming from somewhere in the hills at the far side of the small plain. It was almost sundown and we had miles to drive, and Federico was just a little impatient with us as we stood beside the car, reluctant to start away from the sights and sounds of these Highlands that were the real Guatemala. Even after we were on our way, rolling and dipping through the hills, the notes on the drum followed us, echoing through the sound of our exhaust, thrumming in our ears. We could not be sure of the exact moment when the drum-beat became one with the steady hum of the engine carrying us down out of high Guatemala into another Guatemala we had not seen—the Guatemala of the Alta Vera Paz and of the big business that was Coffee.

XI

THE great coffee district of Guatemala is the Alta Vera Paz and the center of the life of the Alta Vera Paz is Cobán.

The difficulty, from the tourist viewpoint, is that Cobán lies to the north and east of Guatemala City, over fearsome ranges of mountains through which no passable road has yet been built for either automobile or steam-cars. Yet Cobán is a center of wealth, even though it is no large city. The Indians of the region—Kekchi, not Quiché and with an entirely different dialect—are worth seeing for the sake of contrast. And if you want to know about coffee in Guatemala you must go there; the milder climate of the Alta Vera Paz, coupled with the altitude which is some 1500 feet lower than the capital, conspires happily for the growing of some of the finest coffee in the world. Cobaneros now get to Guatemala City by air; there is a branch line of the

TACA that flies over on regular schedule. But for years they didn't bother. Like their coffee they went down the Río Polochíc and the Dulce to the sea, ran over to Europe when the spirit moved them, returned and came back up the river again to their own Cobán without caring whether Guatemala City existed or not. Since most of the foreigners in Cobán are Germans who came to Guatemala half a century ago when President Justo Rufino Barrios gave away the lands of the Alta Vera Paz with both hands in order to get new blood and money into his country, Europe is spiritually closer to them anyhow. And since something like a thousand Germans inhabit this district of the Upper True Peace, the bond with Europe is very close, even though the United States now buys much more Guatemalan coffee than it used to.

Yet in spite of the difficulty of getting over to Cobán—since we had made up our minds to do no flying, it meant a long and tedious journey—we wanted to go. Indeed, it was to be our way out of Guatemala. We had come in by the West Coast, now we would leave by the East, getting to it by the same trip down river that used to be the Cobaneros' only way out. The very end of that trip—the brief but magnificent Río Dulce—was said to be one of Guatemala's three great scenic beauties. Moreover, it would give us a chance to learn about coffee, and a new kind of country. No, we were not going to miss it. We made our plans accordingly.

The Alta Vera Paz was not always the peaceful country its name suggests. In fact it was once inhabited by tribes

so fierce and so unwilling to accept conquest that it was called the Land of War. The original *conquistadores* had had their hands full with the high country and the district around their capital city, and their successors were perhaps not such invincible warriors. They contented themselves with occasional punitive expeditions, on which they got as good as they gave for the most part, and otherwise stayed away from the Kekchi who proved so recalcitrant. Then came Bartolomé de las Casas, a Dominican who had ideas.

Las Casas believed, first of all, in something that seemed like rank foolishness to the Spaniards of his time. He had the notion that the Indians were being wrongly handled, that entirely aside from the ethical and moral question of whether it was right to convert heathen by cutting them to pieces, it wasn't the best way to do the job. He went so far, in fact, as to write a book about it—a book which is now unfortunately lost, or we might know a great deal more about the customs and habits of these Indians. In that book he stated his principle that the way to teach was to lead, and that more could be done in ten minutes by kindness than in a hundred years by force. Indeed, he went further and wrote letters to Spain about it, following this by annoying the ears of the Captain-General with his curious doctrine of peace. At first, officials and soldiers only ridiculed him. But he kept at it so persistently that finally they challenged him to make good. If he thought he could do anything with these intractable Indians, very well then, let him try. Brother Bartholomew took up the challenge. If the viceroy would agree that no other Spaniards beside

himself and his chosen fellow-teachers would enter this region for five years, he would engage not only to Christianize the Indians, but make them loyal subjects of the Crown, even taxpayers. Since the Crown had been getting nothing but trouble out of the district, Las Casas found his challenge accepted with alacrity.

And to the astonishment of everyone concerned he proved that he was right. He and a small group of friars made a sort of narrative song-poem in the Kekchi tongue, in which they recited the story of Christianity from the beginning and exhorted the listener to believe. They taught their song to some Indian traders who were accustomed to go in and out of the hazardous country without being molested. Then they packed up an assortment of beads, mirrors, bells and knives to give the warlike Kekchi something to think about besides slaughter, and sent the Indians ahead as their forerunners.

The amazing plan succeeded. Carefully instructed, the Indian messengers explained to the chiefs in the Alta Vera Paz that there were other kinds of Spaniards than those who had formerly come with sword and fire to make battle. These were quiet, peaceful men with long black robes, who never fought, who taught peace and who did not care for gold. And the chiefs were just curious enough to give these strange men permission to come. They would find out if there were really Spaniards who thought of other things than blood and plunder.

In that way the message of Las Casas finally reached the savage Kekchi, and in that way they were subdued and

the name of their land became The True Peace. The Upper True Peace is merely one portion of the whole, as one speaks, for example, of Northern California. As to whether Las Casas was making converts or more subjects for the King of Spain, that must remain a matter for speculation. There are those who have suggested that he was more the diplomat than the missionary, merely a different type of *conquistador* who proceeded more shrewdly toward the same end. Whatever the truth, the Indians of the Vera Paz were, in the long run, as thoroughly conquered as their cousins in the Highlands.

To get to Cobán, we discovered, it was necessary first to take the train eastward from Guatemala City, just as though we were going down to Puerto Barrios on the coast. After a ride of three hours we would disembark at a station —it isn't much more than that—called Rancho. At Rancho we would find a *camioneta,* a small bus, which would carry us across the many ranges to Cobán. A telegram to William Bird of Cobán, who operated the bus line, would put everything right. Moreover, in Cobán lived Don Roberto Hempstead, American coffee *finquero,* who would be charmed to put us up at his own house. His mother was in Honduras at the moment, visiting a daughter, and might not be back for some time. But Don Roberto would take care of everything; our friend who made the suggestion would wire him, too. Then, when we had seen enough of Cobán and coffee, we would go, again by *camioneta,* down to Panacajché where the little coffee-railroad began, take

that train down to Panzós where the Río Polochíc grew large enough for navigation, and from there down to the sea by launch was not much more than half a day's journey. We would land at Livingston, dash across the mouth of the Gulf by another boat and be in Puerto Barrios, whence we would leave by United Fruit banana-boat for New York at our convenience. Just like that.

It all sounded very simple, very easy. We might have guessed that it sounded too easy entirely.

Our train (there is only one, which goes on all the way down to Barrios with its tourist load) left at 7:40 in the morning. Federico had risen at that hour to say good-bye to us; we were finished with his ministrations and we were sorry, though we didn't know then how we would long for him and his comfortable car in a few hours. The manager of Clark's Tours was on hand, too, assuring us that mail would be forwarded in care of the United Fruit resthouse at Barrios, seeing that our baggage got aboard, noting down again (he must have had a dozen scraps of paper with the address on them) that we would be reachable if it became necessary to get us, at the house of the Hempsteads in Cobán. After all, so far we had been in reasonably close touch with the United States, near a consulate where mail reached us every day and close to cable offices, wireless stations and international flying fields if we had to use any of them. Now, however, we were cutting ourselves off, if only temporarily, from such matters. Our next real touch with the world, barring emergency wires or flights, would be in Puerto Barrios a week later. But Federico and Mr

Hayter humored us beautifully. We felt, as the train pulled out, quite comfortable. Federico's last word had been that in any emergency he would personally fly straight to Cobán and find us. Such was the stress of the moment that we told him, without inquiring the fare, that we would most certainly pay for the plane if he had to do it.

Of the next three hours and a half, perhaps the less said the better. It is a nice little train, this Guatemala-Barrios special, as such trains go. Smoking is permitted anywhere, including the parlor cars, but the conductor or someone (we discovered no porter) opens all the windows immediately, so everything comes out even. The wicker chairs of the observation car are of that stiffish school of porch furniture which went out before the World War, and it is only possible to sit straight up in them, as one used to sit straight on the horsehair sofa on Sundays. The baggage is heaped about informally in miscellaneous piles; you never know whose suitcase or whose foot you may step on if you move. But all in all the train will do.

The right-of-way is something else. If there are more curves to the mile on any other three-hour stretch of railway in the world, I should like to see it. Or, rather, I wouldn't go near it for anything. We whipped round corners, our chairs creaking and slipping, first toward one side of the car and then toward the other. We dove through tunnels that seemed to loop back on themselves like the famous ones on the Canadian Pacific up near Lake Louise, though perhaps they didn't really. We slid across wooden bridges that staggered on stilts over *barrancas* so deep that

we could not be sure whether there were rivers at the bottoms of them or not. For a while we amused ourselves by saluting the engineer as he passed our car coming back round the hairpin curves, but that grew tiresome. Eventually we decided to shut our eyes and pretend we knew nothing about centrifugal force. Now and then we opened them a trifle to peek at a stout elderly gentleman across the aisle who had put on a white coat in preparation for the *tierra caliente* for which he was bound, but now plainly wished he hadn't since we were still fairly high and most of the time running through a chill mist. What with such little games we managed to while away the time. Then it was eleven o'clock and we were at Rancho, only nine hundred feet above sea level and very, very hot.

In Guatemala, the standard practice is to stop the engine and the baggage cars at the station platform. The chair car, in which passengers ride at an extra charge which amounts to more than the railroad fare, usually lands from fifty to a hundred feet up the track.

At Rancho the engineer did even better than usual. I strained out of the window, but at a full hundred yards it was impossible to make out the lettering on the station sign. Still, it had to be Rancho; it couldn't be anything else. We got our bags together and climbed down, barely avoiding a flat-car loaded with machinery that leapt into unexpected motion on the next track. There, right down the line, was the station. Straight across from it was the hotel. In fact, straight across from it was Rancho. The Hotel Motagua, named for the stream we had been following all morning,

is Rancho. We staggered through the heat and the flies to the ramshackle, one-story building and inquired of a sixteen-year-old *ladino* girl in high-heeled slippers badly run over and a one-piece dress of indeterminate color except for the stains on the bosom which were clearly gravy, when the Bird *camioneta* was expected. She scratched some raw looking mosquito-bites on both bare ankles for a moment and answered indifferently *"Á las doce"*—at twelve o'clock. We said *"Muy bien. 'Chas gracias."* Somehow there didn't seem to be anything else to say.

We had cooled our heels at the hotel for half an hour, unpacking our sandwiches and buying some tepid beer to go with them while we fought flies, when the Bird *camioneta* arrived, very sumptuous in silver paint, and discharged its passengers in a cloud of penetrating dust.

Rancho itself is not dusty; it is oppressively, stickily hot, that is all. But obviously the road to Cobán must have been something different. All the passengers seemed to wear brownish-white coats—that is, until they patted themselves. Then they were lost in the whirl of brown powder that enveloped them. The bags that were unshipped looked as though they might have been across the Sahara, and when a *mozo* went at the car with a dustcloth (a delicate attention that we learned later was all on our account) the general effect was that of a severe sandstorm. When it subsided, however, we had a chance to see something we had not noted before. Mr Bird's *camioneta* was a silver-painted Ford station-wagon. The drive to Cobán was something

like seven hours; we had determined that before. This, we could see it now, was going to be a real treat.

We sat and smoked and listened to the shrill, discontented voices of the *ladino* girls who came and went through the kitchen and the fly-specked dining-room while the bus driver ate his lunch and the other passengers gradually faded away about their business. Eventually the driver finished eating and came out to the front of the hotel with a dark young Guatemalteco who introduced himself to us in good enough English as Mr William Bird's agent. He had instructions, he said, to ride with us and point out places of interest along the way. When we asked what those were, he said vaguely, "Oh, the mountains, you understand. All those thing." We were to have a special *camioneta,* too; no one else was to ride with us. A second station-wagon was on its way, an hour behind this one, to take mail and other passengers. We expressed suitable appreciation of Mr Bird's kindness and hinted that if this was the case we were fully prepared to leave at any time, the sooner the better. He said "Hot, no?" and fanned himself with his cap.

The one good thing about that trip was that the road began to rise almost at once.

In less than half an hour we were out of the stifling heat and well up on the side of the first of seven mountain ranges that had to be got over between Rancho and Cobán. Most of our progress was made in low and second gear; not because the road was too steep but because it contained so many pot-holes, rocks, ruts and ditches that it was not

safe to go any faster. There were a few giddy climbs, one of which lasted a full forty-five minutes, all in low gear, but for the most part the difficulty was a matter of bad surface. Our driver didn't seem to worry much about it. He said we ought to see it in the rainy season. C. said no, we oughtn't, and we left it at that.

As for the points of interest, those consisted mostly of the names of little villages through which we passed, and after a while that diversion palled. One was much like another in that low country; a string of thatched shacks, each with its hammock stretched between two posts, each hammock with a languid occupant, usually a man who looked as though he might easily be suffering from malaria and hookworm both. We did rise out of the worst heat soon, but it was two or three hours before we really got into fairly high country, and though we had left Rancho's heavy warmth behind, it was still all tropics and no mistake about it. We wondered as we went where Mr Bird's young agent had learned his English and asked him. Oh, he had learned in the States. Where? In San Francisco, at Mission High School. "The world," said C., "is a small place." I added, "After all." Our friend the agent, delighted at encountering an English saying he had heard before, repeated it after us in Spanish and the driver nodded his head and observed *"Ah, sí! Seguramente!"* That made it unanimous.

Agreeing about the size of the world helped to break the ice still further, and to pass the time we discussed the United States, almost entirely from the viewpoint of North

American talking pictures. Our young agent hadn't missed any picture that had come to Guatemala in the past year, and we rocked along the mountain trails to the accompaniment of profound critical analysis of William Powell and Myrna Loy, both of whom he admired, and Robert Taylor and Greta Garbo whom he didn't like. Powell would have been interested, we thought, to know that this young Central American thought him *"Muy suave,"*—very smooth. Shirley Temple, he said was *preciosa.* We agreed that most North Americans thought so, too.

At four in the afternoon we stopped at the pleasant little town of Salamá, the halfway point, and I wandered round the plaza until I found a place from which I could photograph the singularly lovely church. Back at our express-car, I discovered that, two weeks before, a pair of Americans had been clapped into jail for taking pictures in Salamá; in a strategic position to command all approaches to the Alta Vera Paz from the south and west, it is a sort of military center for the district and they don't like cameras about. This time, however, no one said anything and we departed without trouble on the last lap of the trip.

From this point it was a matter of real mountain-climbing. Cobán itself is only about 4200 feet up but you have to go much higher several times before you get there. The sun sank as we rose and dropped, and as we skirted the *barrancas* we could see the fireflies in the tree-tops below us. Though it is mountainous enough in this country, it is tropical too—much more than in the true Highland country. The last twenty miles were reasonably level, and we

wound along beside a pleasant little river whose trickle we could hear now and then through the dark. There were no drums in the night here, only warm, damp airs that brought us new and strange odors of heavy blossoms and unknown herbs. It was cloudy, too, though we caught occasional glimpses of moon and stars through gaps blown by some wandering wind so high we could not feel it; they say it rains thirteen months out of the twelve in the Alta Vera Paz. Then we were rolling through the dim byways of Cobán, a small compact little town, very neatly kept, its cobbled streets clean, a coffee-bush or two in every yard. No one was about; after all this was the hour when all good Cobaneros were within doors eating their dinners. Indeed, in the eerie half-darkness we saw only one thing we had ever seen before; it jerked us upright in our hard seats. There, jutting out over a still side-street six thousand miles from its home, was a swastika. Cut out of iron it depended from its metal arm over the sidewalk before a very Spanish-looking building of white stucco covered with bougainvillea. "The German Club," said our guide. "Heil!" said C. We had arrived in Little Germany. Two blocks more and we drew up before Don Roberto's door. "Come in, come in!" said our host. "You must be ready for a bath and a highball!" It was the best speech of welcome either of us had ever heard.

Cobán, as has been said, is coffee and coffee is Cobán. In the hills round about the district are the *fincas* on which is grown some of the finest coffee in the Republic.

Cobán itself has a population of something like 24,000 according to the official figures, but it does not seem as large as that. Nowadays, of course, air transport has brought it into close touch with the rest of Guatemala (the capital is only forty-five minutes by plane, though it had taken us ten hours to make the distance), but before the days of flying Cobán had to be sufficient to itself. It has, therefore, the air of being more of a city than it is. Its plaza is neat and pleasant; its municipal buildings are extensive and modern. Like all other towns of any size in Guatemala, it is more or less a military center; bugles wake you in the morning and sing you to sleep at night. And though it is damp most of the time, yet the altitude is sufficient to keep it fairly cool. Altogether, as so many of its inhabitants would put it, it is a *gemütlich* little town.

On our first morning we visited the market, chiefly to see wherein the Indians of the district, descendants of those fierce people that made the Alta Vera Paz a Land of War, differed from those we had known in the Highland country.

As far as the men are concerned, there is no attempt at distinctive costume; no embroidered jacket like that of Chichicastenango, no striped trousers as in Atitlán, no checked kilt like Sololá's. The Indian men here wear whatever garments they can lay hands on—usually white pajama-looking trousers with nondescript, faded factory-made coats. This is true, too, even of the Indian who comes into town from the neighboring hills. Aside from his *mecapal,* his tump-line which he uses to carry his burden like

any other Indian of the country, and his straw *sombrero,* he might be anyone from anywhere. He is a bit stronger-looking and perhaps a trifle larger than his Quiché cousin back in the mountains, but that is about the only difference the stranger observes in him.

The Indian women, though, are another matter.

They are, first, far and away the handsomest we have seen anywhere in Guatemala, and that includes Quezaltenango which had led the procession for looks up to the time we saw the Cobaneras. They wear a very full skirt of Quezaltenango weave; in that respect they reminded us of the girls in that section. But their *huipiles* are unique. The everyday blouse is generally of a dark blue stuff, almost hidden by the rich designs woven into it in soft shades of green and purple and yellow. The dress-up one, however, is of thin white material, since the climate permits; sometimes of home-woven cloth, but now most frequently of imported scrim, embroidered lavishly round the neck in purple and blue and green designs, chiefly flowers. It is not tucked into the skirt under a sash, but is worn hanging loosely, two long points hanging gracefully in front and two behind. So far, the glittering Christmas-tree beads from Czecho-Slovakia have not found acceptance here. Necklaces are still of silver, occasionally the strings of old coins that you see in the Highlands, but more often finely worked chains, one on top of another. They are worn longer, too, and swing down across the breast instead of threatening to choke the wearer in the Highland style.

We wondered at first about some of the startlingly tall

women and girls we saw striding through the market, their *huipiles* dazzling the eye, their long silver chains swinging, their complexions several shades lighter than the Indian brown, the color in their cheeks so much more marked. Then we remembered that hundreds of German *finqueros* had been here for two generations. Perhaps that accounts, too, for the manner of sitting in the market-place. Here the women do not squat cross-legged in the Turkish style, as the Highland women do. The style is to tuck one leg across in front and then to plant the other foot flat and hug the knee. Maybe even one drop of European blood is enough to make the cross-legged habit impossible. We were musing on the odd mixture of inheritance, when the tallest girl we had yet seen passed us. In spite of her café-au-lait tint, the European strain was unmistakable. Blue eyes looked out from above high, broad cheekbones; her hair was unquestionably on the red-blonde side; her walk was free; no quick Indian trot but a long swinging step. Yet her braid, plaited with a gay blue ribbon, hung down over a white *huipil,* and her feet were bare under the full Indian skirt. Whatever the indiscretions of her father or grandfather, she was still an Indian girl walking to market with her basket on her head. What may come of this commingling of races in the Alta Vera Paz is hard to say. Indian and North-European blood do not produce a *ladino* certainly; that word itself implies Latinization. Nor is the child of such a union a European, not by any means. Just how much admixture of alien blood does it take to lift (if "lift" is the word) the Indian out of his Indianness? Supposing

our Kekchi Gretchen who had just passed us were to have a child by a white man? Will that child be Indian still? What will be the end result of this business, as a local German called it, of "putting milk in the coffee"? No one we met so much as hazarded a guess. The chances are, I believe, that it won't change anything very much; the stock will go back to Indian again. Guatemala no longer invites foreigners, at least not in the sense of the old days when President Barrios was reaching out for capital and begging the world to come in. Today's motto is "Guatemala for the Guatemalteco" and the effect of that policy, if it is pursued for any long period, will keep the mixed-race population down. Eventually the drop of white will be lost again in the ocean of Indian blood. The little brown men of these Central American mountains have withstood conquest and convulsions of nature, drouth, crop-failure and complete shifts of population in centuries past. They will go on being little brown men for centuries yet to come.

The most famous coffee *finca* in the Alta Vera Paz lies in the hills an hour's drive from Cobán.

Perhaps the first thing we noticed on our way was the difference between the topography of this district and the country from which we had just come. It is much warmer here, of course; after all, the Highland towns average from 7000 to 8000 feet high and this section is closer to 4000. But it is more than just that. The hills are more suave, not so immense and abrupt. There are *barrancas,* but not the sheer drops of two and three thousand feet. You have

lovely views here, but they are milder, more chastened. It is altogether a gentler countryside by far, and there is not a volcano in sight.

Because of the constant rain, too, the mountains are greener, the growth more luxuriant. This was not quite the real jungle yet, but it was closer than anything we had seen. At the same time, the altitude brings about some odd contrasts. As we wound through the hills we would occasionally come out into a little valley or meadow in which a fine stand of maples and poplars flourished—pure Connecticut or New Jersey, almost. But around the next bend the hillsides, sloping steeply down to the road, would be green in shining coffee, shaded by banana palms and the umbrella-trimmed *cuje*-trees, towering still higher to serve as the last bit of protection against a too-strong sun. The *finca* we were to visit was a little higher in the hills, perhaps as much as 5000 feet, and before we reached it we passed through a belt of pines. There were still the maples, however, and always the mixture of coffee and bananas, fringed with the lavender summer dahlias, tall and graceful against the blue sky. And invariably, in every tree we passed, were the orchids in clumps, as much the trade-mark of Guatemala as the *quetzal*-bird we have never seen alive.

The *finca,* when we first saw it, looked like a tiny clump of white shacks perched precariously on a little ledge in the side of the tallest hill. As we came closer, we saw that it was not as small as we had thought. It is built into a hillside shelf, most of which is man-made with terraces and

retaining walls. A thousand feet below, a small river winds through the canyon, and all water for the *finca* must be raised by pumps from that source. Strangely, in this excessively rainy country, water is hard to come by. Wells are few, even out in the hills, and available streams have to be the chief supply. Nevertheless, steep as the canyon-sides were, they were solidly planted with coffee under its banana-tree shade. Picking such fields is a much more difficult task, but this particular *finca* (run by a company rather than an individual) doesn't care about that. Hillsides produce fine coffee; that's enough. And even if you do become known far and wide among the Indian pickers as having steep and troublesome hills, that's not the point. The point is to raise good coffee. At, of course, a profit.

The manager, a tall, heavy-set young German, met us as we drove into the yard of the big house and made us welcome. Don Roberto was with us and a visit from a brother *finquero* is always a pleasure. A visit from traveling Americans was even better, especially since it was close to his early lunch-time and we could all eat together. We tried to protest, but he looked very shocked. What? Come all the way out here from Cobán and not eat a meal? It was unheard of! Besides, we would be doing him a real favor; it wasn't often that he had any visitors to entertain. We gave in without argument. I don't know about Don Roberto, but for ourselves it was what we had wanted ever since we had seen the place. We knew nothing about coffee-growing and here was our chance to see the whole process, from tree to sack. And whether he realized it or not, our new friend

and temporary host was the man who was going to tell us and show us.

First, though, there was lunch, and while we waited we looked at the orchid specimens he had begun to collect in a little summer-house, poked about among his roses and geraniums, thinking how much they looked like home, admired his six fine royal palms and the borders of violets and lobelia he had set out in his small formal garden. The view from his recessed front verandah was excellent, and we sat and took in the rolling clouds on one side, and on the other the jade-and-white water tumbling along the bottom of the *barranca*. Down below somewhere a pump thudded and sighed, and beyond us on a lower terrace half a dozen Indians were raking a quarter acre or thereabouts of coffee beans, spread out on the cement of the drying-*patio*. Their crude wooden paddles made a soft, rhythmic scraping sound, the sun was warm but not too hot, and our German friend sat and told us about his *finca* in alternate Spanish and English with a fine rich Hamburg accent. This, we decided, must be a very agreeable way to live, the nearest thing we had ever seen to the old feudal society of the pre-War South we had read about.

After lunch, as we sipped tiny cups of black coffee on the porch again, we learned that it was something like that and also something quite unlike. What is true in Cobán, of course, is not necessarily true everywhere in the Republic; different districts demand different solutions to their problems, and what is routine in the Alta Vera Paz may be entirely out of line in Antigua, for example. Still,

since this is the important coffee-growing portion of Guatemala, what obtains here is at least most of the story.

Coffee, here as elsewhere, depends upon the Indian just as cotton in the old South depended upon the negro picker. You can be the greatest agricultural expert that ever lived; you may have the most modern hullers and separators, the finest managers and overseers money can hire. You may start with the best seedling stock, and Nature may favor you from start to finish. But the Indian picks the coffee. Without him you can do nothing. The *mozo,* illiterate, superstitious, childlike, irresponsible (in the Anglo-Saxon sense) is the key to coffee growing. No matter what else you haven't, you must have him. And since there are peaks and valleys in coffee-growing, as in other agricultural production, there has to be a special and complicated labor system in the coffee country.

Here the *mozos* are divided into three classifications; *meseros, colonos* and *voluntarios.*

The *mesero* works on your *finca* all year round. In return, you pay him eight cents a day and his ration, prescribed by law, of corn, coffee, black beans and *panela,* the so-called "black sugar." You must also give him a bit of land on which to grow some corn of his own every year. You give him a house, too, though down here where it is warm a very sketchy thatched hut fills the bill well enough. Moreover, the *mesero* must have one week off to plant his *milpa,* another to clean it and still another to crop it. Usually his wife works too—perhaps in the *beneficio* sorting coffee, or sometimes picking.

The *colono* works under different arrangements. For one thing, he gets more land; about 25 acres, which are his for his lifetime. He has to make his own house, but he does not work as many days for you. In the picking season he works straight through, ordinarily for about four months—November through February. But as soon as the crop is over he works alternate weeks only until the time for his own necessary work. Then he gets three weeks to himself to prepare the ground, three weeks later to plant, then another three weeks to clean and a final three weeks to crop. His planting, chiefly corn and beans, is usually in April and his crop-time in September, both of which match nicely with the coffee crop. In his extra alternate weeks he does what he likes. The more ambitious ones raise minor crops —*chiles,* perhaps, or some garden stuff. Most of them, however, just rest. The *colono* might make extra wages often, by working on various odd-jobs; there are not always men enough on the place for everything that needs doing. But usually he doesn't. His labor during the coffee-crop, together with his odd weeks, takes care of the legal requirement that he must work at least 150 days each year, and for most Indians that's enough. If you have enough to eat, why work? Also, the *colono* gets a cash wage for the picking—from four to five cents a day. He does not, however, get a ration; the land the *finquero* must give him is to take care of his food.

The third, or *voluntario,* group supplies the men needed in the rush of the crop.

The *voluntario* lives usually on his own land somewhere.

He earns from ten to twelve cents a day, with rations, when he works. Generally he goes as he pleases from place to place, staying with a *patrón* who treats him well, or moving on to some other *finca* where he has heard things are better. It seems like a low wage, perhaps. Yet it is true that if it were not for the law most Indians would not work for anyone at all. Their standard of living is such that they can subsist, in the way that suits them, on what they can get out of their own little corn-patches in the hills. In fact, so little do the Indians of this country like to perform manual labor for money that a racket grew up among the poorer class of *ladinos,* who used to sign the Indian's work-book for him for ten cents, swearing that the holder of the book had done so many days' work, whether he had or hadn't. The government is trying to stamp out this practice and has fairly well succeeded.

The work law, as a matter of fact, applies to all Indians everywhere unless they own a specified amount of property —so many *cuerdas* of corn and black beans, a *cuerda* being about twenty-five square yards of land. In such cases, the Indian is admitted to be a man of property and considered to be well occupied taking care of his own. But that applies to very few. Most Indians come under the work laws. If they did not, the coffee would not get picked. And if that happened, Guatemala would slide downhill fast. To be sure, there are those who will argue that what's meant by "Guatemala," in this sense, is merely the fifteen per cent —the owner class. That is not entirely true. The fifteen per cent includes the great middle class, the shopkeepers, the

clerks, all the bourgeoisie. Still, your social reformer will say, the Indian is more than three-quarters of the country. Why should he be exploited for the benefit of the small minority? If the bottom of the coffee business should drop out, the Indian could still maintain himself—in the very fashion in which he wants to maintain himself, too—off the country, as he has done for hundreds of years. What if he should rise and take precisely that right?

Well, I'm afraid the answer is that in that case the Indian would have written his own doom. The fact that he has tilled his fields in the mountains and kept himself alive for hundreds of years does not prove that he can go on doing it for hundreds of years more. The truth of it is that it is very doubtful if he could go on, as things are now, for more than another generation or two, after which he would either have to migrate again, as he did nearly a thousand years ago, or starve. For the Indian method of farming (like our own prodigal thoughtlessness in the present dust-bowl areas) has resulted in wholesale loss of the two things he must have if he is to survive in the Highlands—timber and good earth. No Indian has ever thought of reforestation. (For that matter only a very few *finqueros* have had the foresight to see what will happen if something is not done along this line very soon.) The Indian has simply gone along for centuries, denuding his hills of their trees, laying waste vast areas for the wood he has to have to give him fire. Nor are his farming methods much better. After a few years of hillside plowing and planting, he finds that his ground is growing lean. Very well: he moves on. Then the

rains come and his hillside acres disappear. With nothing but last year's stubble to hold them, they are simply washed down into the *barrancas*. Everywhere in the Highlands we saw the appalling results of this age-old helter-skelter habit; hills that are bare rock where there were once fields, great gashes of washed-out earth scarring the mountainsides. No, you can't say, "The Indian has got along for hundreds of years; he could get along, in the way he wants to, for hundreds more." He couldn't. The thing has gone too far now. Two generations and he would starve.

So that, unless your social argufier means to say that if the Indian wants to go to hell in a hand-basket he should be allowed to do it, his point does not hold. It may be that the present system is, in one sense of the word, "enslaving" the Indian, though it is so much better than that which obtained when President Ubico went into office that there is no comparison. But without this "enslavement," not only the rest of the country would starve, but so would the Indian himself. As for his being able to manage the great *fincas* himself, and so reap for himself the fruits of his labors, Marx-fashion, perhaps some day that will come about. But not for a while yet. It will take years of education, years of conditioning before the Indian of these mountains can even begin to do that. Witness the case of the *finquero* who voluntarily upped the ration allowance of his men from two to four *tamales* a day. He did it because his hillside slopes were steep and he wanted to keep his men satisfied so that they would not move on to other, easier plantations and put him to the necessity of breaking in a

new lot. But what did the Indians do? Precisely what a shrewd lot of schoolchildren in the United States might have done. They held a meeting and sent a committee to the *patrón* to demand ten *tamales* a day! They couldn't have eaten the ten if they'd got them. They knew that. But if the boss was going to do them favors, why not try to get still more? The sequel was that the *finquero* swore mightily and laid about him with his stick, and the committee ducked and grinned and ran back to report that there would be no ten *tamales*. The rest of the workmen chuckled, too, and went back to work. Childish? Certainly. But there it is.

For Guatemala, then, until the time comes when the Indian has moved much further ahead than he is now, the system of President Ubico seems to be the only system that can keep things going. And if the Indian is not as happy as all Guatemaltecos insist on telling you he is—well, was he happy when crop-failure and flood forced him to abandon his great cities of the lowlands and move up into the hills to begin all over again, when he was his own master ten centuries ago?

When Stephens and Catherwood traveled through Guatemala almost a hundred years ago there was no coffee in the country.

It is not known who began the cultivation of coffee commercially in Guatemala, but everyone will tell you that Barrios, The Liberator, gave coffee its great boost. At any rate, in the sixty years or so since Barrios began offering

church lands to those who would make coffee plantations of them, Guatemala's annual crop has risen to an average of a hundred million pounds a year. There are charts in Guatemala's Department of Agriculture which show where all this goes; nowadays the United States takes something like sixty per cent of the crop, though only a few years ago it was Germany that led the field. But it is not so much where it all goes as what it brings that is the chief concern of the Guatemalteco, whether he is in the coffee business or not. The whole structure of Guatemala's finance is bound up with coffee, and the market price, as it rises or drops, is everyone's affair. Before the depression, *finqueros* were getting around thirty and thirty-five dollars a *quintal,* which is a hundred pounds. Three or four years ago they were getting as low as five or six. Now, with coffee moving upward to sixteen and eighteen dollars, Gautemala is reasonably prosperous again and keeping its fingers crossed.

Very fortunately coffee in Guatemala has no enemies; no diseases or parasites keep the *finquero* on tenterhooks. But he has other worries. Coffee must be coddled all the time; from the very beginning it needs the greatest care. Set out in rows in its nursery, it is watched as carefully as a baby in an incubator until it is ready for transplanting. After they are two years old the plants are moved again, this time to the *cafetal* where they will produce for as long as thirty or forty years with proper pruning and shade. Above all, shade is important; the full blaze of the sun is ruinous. The pruning, and spacing, too, must be just right; too closely planted the trees will not get enough air, but

too far apart they will not get the right shade and there will be waste ground. If the trees grow too tall they use up their strength; if they are brought into bearing too soon they will not bear as long. Wind and rain may do much damage, and sometimes there will be good and bad years for no reason that anyone can pin down—they are just good or bad. We were forcibly reminded of grapes and the wine industry as our host and friend told us the story.

As for the harvesting of the crop and the reduction of the whole berry to the "berry" as we know it, that is as careful and as exact an agricultural science as any on earth. Coffee, for example, does not ripen all at once; the picker must judge as he goes, a berry at a time, picking only those that are exactly right, leaving the rest for the next going-over. Then the beans must be fermented to get rid of the pulp, dried so that the inner covering of the bean becomes brittle, rid of that covering by special machines, peeled again to leave the perfectly clean twin seed which is a delicate blue-green in the case of coffee grown in the higher altitudes, a yellower tinge for lowland coffee. After that, the beans are hand-sorted, women and girls going over them one by one in large trays, sorting out the imperfect ones, selecting and sizing them with incredible speed. Only then is the coffee sacked, ready for shipment. You can realize the tremendous man-and-woman-power needed to carry out all these operations on a hundred million pounds of coffee a year.

Having absorbed all this from our host while we drank the best black coffee we have ever tasted, we walked down

with him to the *beneficio,* the work department, of his plantation, to see the whole process in operation. Even to our inexperienced eye, the place was a marvel of efficiency and cleanliness; the German passion for exactitude and neatness was evident everywhere. You could have eaten off any floor in the building that housed the hullers, the sorters, the separators, the loft in which the women were hand-picking the very finest grades. We sauntered and loafed and listened, taking pictures as we went. Now and then a woman looked up fleetingly from the work under her flying hands and smiled, but for the most part all were sober, serious, intent on the piece-work that pays them six or seven cents a day to add to their husbands' wages. Then, because it was plainly blowing up to rain, we had to go; on these roads a little moisture makes a great deal of trouble. Our German friend said good-bye to us regretfully. We were, he told us, the only visitors, excepting in the way of business, that he had had in nearly seven months.

We beat the rain back to Cobán, but just by minutes. When it came, though, it was not a drenching downpour, merely a slow, steady sprinkling that was rather pleasant than otherwise. Bathed and clean in white ducks—the first chance to wear really light clothing we had had since coming to Guatemala—we sat in the twilight and watched the water drip from the shiny leaves of the giant magnolia in the center of the patio while the tiny, barefooted Indian maid pat-patted back and forth with tea and limes and rum. Don Roberto switched on his powerful radio (in Guatemala everyone has the best and biggest radio he can

afford, to keep in touch with the outside world) and we listened to the miracle of short-wave from Rome, Berlin and London. Cobán's bishop came to call, dark and wrinkled with bright, intelligent eyes, very impressive in black and purple silk, his amethyst ring glowing on his hand as he talked quietly of Guatemala and Europe and how fine it was to be able to get over to the capital nowadays by plane. More than ever we felt like guests in an early-day plantation house, lapped in the peaceful spaciousness of a feudal order that had not yet begun to question itself or to be questioned. Undoubtedly, too, the sense of luxury, of peace and quiet, was the more intense because we knew it was our last for a while. Tomorrow Don Roberto was going up to one of the family *fincas;* six hours on horseback over the mountains. And we were starting on our trip down river, to the east coast lowland jungles, to alligators, heat, mud, malarial mosquitoes and the great Empire of the Banana. I laced my tea with another spoonful of rum and regretfully squeezed the last half-lime over the cup. Tomorrow one of *Los Carros Plateados,* Mr William Bird's silvered cars, would call for us, bag and baggage—at six o'clock in the morning.

XII

THE trip down to the coast from Cobán is not only one of the most beautiful in Guatemala in its way; it is also one of the most adventurous.

The Río Dulce itself is only a very small, though magnificent, part of the journey. Before you get down to it you have three hours' travel from Cobán to Pancajché by car, three more to Panzós by train (and what a train!), a night in what is called by courtesy a "rest house," and most of a day's journey by boat down the Río Polochíc and the length of Lake Izabal from which the Dulce leads to the Gulf. For this length of time you must carry your own food and water. To be sure, it's not precisely exploration; you are following a route that has been used for decades by the German *finqueros* and for hundreds of years before their time by Indians and Spaniards going down to the sea. But neither is it travel de luxe; not by a long shot.

Most of the time, in fact, you are pretty uncomfortable and unhappy. Yet, now that we look back on it as a deed accomplished, we would not have missed it for anything.

In Cobán, William Bird's silver station-wagon calls for you at six in the morning.

Cobaneros have been trying for some time to get him to change that departure-hour. Leaving at six, you get to the tiny railway terminus at about nine o'clock and the train doesn't arrive from below until eleven and starts back at noon. You spend those hours just sitting. You don't walk, because a hundred yards uphill from the station you're in the jungle and a hundred yards downhill you are also in the jungle. Anyway, it's too hot to walk. Since passengers from Panzós come up with the train, it would seem to be the sensible thing for the Bird *camioneta* to leave Cobán at about eight, making Pancajché just in time to pick them up. But Bird doesn't see it that way. The *camioneta* has always left at six; very well, it shall continue to leave at six. Perhaps it seems more businesslike or something.

Don Roberto was up with us at five and had ready for us a cold roasted chicken, bread-and-butter sandwiches and a dozen oranges. These we added to the assortment of canned goods we had bought, clanked the bottles of mineral water on top of the sack and were ready. The hoot of the station-wagon sounded outside just as we finished our coffee. This was good-bye to Cobán, for which we had formed a genuine affection. Don Roberto came out with us in the drizzle and saw that we were well stowed aboard while the housekeeper, the little maid and the gardener

waved from the doorway. Perhaps it was a good thing that the departure was all so matter-of-fact. In another moment we should have trumped up some wild excuse to stay, clutching as one does at the familiar thing and shrinking just a little from the unknown and untried. We were looking forward to the river trip, yet we were a little timid about it too. And Cobán was so friendly, so intimate; Don Roberto had been so generous a host, had treated us so pleasantly. Now, for two days, we were to be on our own, in a sense in which we had not yet experienced that sensation. No hotels, no car at our disposal, no Federico to tell us things, to make sense of our fantastic Spanish, to stand by us staunchly in whatever pickle we got ourselves into. Only the river and the jungle ahead, and who knew what else? I knew C. was thinking the same things; her face was preternaturally solemn and she was looking back at the Hempstead doorway as though she never wanted to forget it. Then our driver engaged his clutch and we were bouncing and rattling over the cobbles on the road out of town.

This time we had company. An elderly Indian couple sat in the back seat, surrounded by their bundles and sacks. Up ahead the driver was a middle-aged, stout *ladino* gentleman, at his feet an orchid in its clump of moss; down in this part of the country it seems to be the fashion to carry an orchid about with you wherever you go. It was raining into the car a little, in spite of the canvas drop-curtains, but we didn't mind, nor did the two Indians behind us. Our *ladino* companion was annoyed, however, and kept

boosting his coat-collar up around his neck to show that he was not accustomed to roughing it like this.

From Cobán to Pancajché the road is downhill all the way. Indeed, that mild word does not begin to describe it. Our driver dropped into second gear on the outskirts of town, and, barring a few shifts into low, stayed there. We wound downward mile after mile, bracing ourselves so that we would not fall forward against the front seat, snatching a moment's chance to sit back when the car hesitated before plunging through the little streams that constantly crossed the road. After the first hour the Indian woman was frankly ill. Happily she was not going all the way. We stopped to let them both out at the village of Tactíc, and her old husband grinned in embarrassment as he helped her dismount. Then we went on again, crawling down the sides of these our last *barrancas* that never seemed to end.

The difference in elevation is something like 3000 feet, and by the time we drew up to the station at Pancajché we were aware that it was hot. Luckily the mosquito is not one of the pestilences that fly at noonday; in that respect, at least, we were safe, though Pancajché has a charmingly malarial reputation. There is only the barest suggestion of a village. Across the road a few listless Indian women squatted with trays of overripe fruit and flies, and one especially enterprising merchant had half a dozen woven cloths of no particular kind, just cloths, which she languidly offered us. We said no to everything. At any rate we had our own food and we could put in the time waiting for the train by arranging ourselves a lunch from that.

However, you can't take much more than two hours dismembering and eating a chicken, and we had lingered over food as long as we possibly could by the time the train arrived. Now, we thought, we could depart.

Not at all. Herr Schmidt, who is manager, conductor, dispatcher and general counsel for the one-train railroad, informed us that it would be another hour before the start for Panzós. There was a complicated matter of shifting and shunting cars to be undertaken, and anyway his trains always left exactly on schedule time. It was not his fault that Mr Bird always got people down from Cobán so early in the morning. We supposed it wasn't. We also supposed we would wait. As it happened, the delay was not so bad after all. The engineer, a large and very black Jamaica Negro, had the time of his life. He tooted up the narrow-gauge line with one diminutive freight-car and tooted back with another, his fireman ringing the bell like mad all the way. There were two passenger cars, first class and second class, and these had to be moved from the rear of the up train to the rear of the down train. It was a little like playing railroad on the floor on Christmas morning, even to watch him from the elevated platform whence we could look down into the cab and see his hand on the throttle and his foot on a turkey he was taking back down the line for somebody's dinner. The rain had stopped, and the sun beat down through the heavy air on the Indian women in the road, more listless than ever. Herr Schmidt, short and stout and sweating through his whites, stumped back and forth, issuing hoarse commands, wheezing asthmatically

around the half-cigar clamped in his teeth, every ten minutes taking off his thick glasses and wiping them free of moisture. Soot from the puffing engine sifted gently down on the platform, the baggage and the two North American passengers. It was noon exactly when Herr Schmidt grandly waved us aboard. A dozen Indians scrambled for the second-class coach, the whistle screamed joyfully and we were away.

Perhaps the most startling thing we learned on that jolting, winding ride down to Panzós was that the train had no brakes. Herr Schmidt, however, hastened to explain to us that this was really a safety measure. If there were good brakes his engineer would be inclined to go too fast; without brakes he knows he can't. So the train proceeds at a mean speed of something like ten miles an hour, creeping down a deep gorge where the roadbed has been chiseled out of sheer rock wall and the Río Polochíc, now grown to good size, slips greasily past on the other side. Along the way, friends of the engineer and of Herr Schmidt called up greetings. Sometimes, in order to finish a sentence, they ran alongside for a hundred yards or so at a quiet jog-trot that still left breath for conversation. Once or twice, at wayside shacks, the train came to a dead stop while a passenger got off or another got on. No one entered the first-class coach, though; only foreigners and rich *finqueros* waste their money that way. We had it completely to ourselves, excepting for Herr Schmidt who dozed between stations, springing to furious activity at every pause. He

THREE LITTLE SISTERS READY FOR A WALK, DRESSED IN THEIR SUNDAY BEST.

THE ANCIENT MAYAN FIFE AND DRUM MAKE PAGAN-CHRISTIAN MUSIC ON THE CHURCH STEPS.

HOMEMADE SKYROCKETS ARE STACKED IN THE SQUARE READY FOR THE FIESTA.

IN BARBARIC VELVET AND SPANGLES, THIS INDIAN HOLDS HIS GOURD RATTLE READY FOR THE DANCE.

ALL MASKS FOR THE DANCE OF THE CONQUISTADORES ARE PINK AND WHITE WITH GOLDEN MOUSTACHES AND BEARDS.

THE BULL AND HIS AIDE, WHO INTERRUPT THE DANCE BY DASHING PERIODICALLY INTO THE MIDDLE OF THINGS.

COSTUMED AS DON PEDRO DE ALVARADO HIMSELF,
GOLDEN BEARD, RED CURLS, SWORD, AND ALL.

AS IN THE VIRGINIA REEL, DANCERS FROM OPPOSITE CORNERS MEET, CIRCLE, AND RETIRE.

EMBARRASSED MAIDS OF HUITÁN, DRESSED FOR THE BIG DAY AND VERY COY ABOUT THE CAMERA.

THE CALVARIO OF COBÁN, UPON ITS HILL, BROODS OVER THE LITTLE COFFEE TOWN.

COFFEE PICKERS MUST KNOW WHICH BERRIES ARE
RIPE AND WHICH MUST BE LEFT TO MATURE.

ON THE DRYING PLATFORM THE COFFEE IS RAKED
AND TURNED TO GET ALL THE SUN.

DRIED AND READY FOR SORTING, THE COFFEE IS PILED WITH LONG WOODEN PUSHERS.

BEAN BY BEAN THE EXPERT WOMEN SORTERS GO OVER THE FINEST GRADES FOR EXPORT.

DOWN THE BROWN, OILY RÍO POLOCHIC THROUGH THE JUNGLE TO GUATEMALA'S EAST COAST.

THE EASIEST PLACE IN THE WORLD TO GET LOST: A BANANA FARM WHERE EACH TREE LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE THE OTHERS.

was quite deaf, we learned, but he was not much inclined to conversation anyway, and neither were we. Here was the river on our right, a very jungly, brown, deep river such as we had read about in stories of the tropics. Tomorrow we would be floating down it. This was the jungle on its banks—the real thing. Who knew what might lurk behind that impenetrable wall, in those green mansions? Almost anything, probably; certainly the companionable anopheles that carries malaria. Panzós, right on the river bank, was full of malaria; we had heard that everywhere. As we drew alongside the station I looked up to discover C. offering me a bottle of the mineral water and a little round box of large white pills. They were quinine, bought in preparation for the worst, at Guatemala City's best drugstore. I was to take one. I took it.

The little station at Pancajché had been hot enough but here at Panzós we really began to learn about the damp and muggy heat of the tropic lowlands. Here, too, we were actually in the jungle. Our little train had been chugging through dense growth for the past three hours, but now it had rattled away to its yard and left us right in the middle of what we had heretofore only been looking at. There is a difference.

Panzós is not a town, it is merely the name of a place on the river-bank where the railway ends and a launch takes up the task of transport. There are perhaps ten or fifteen houses strung along the river. Naturally there is no hotel. Because it is necessary to wait overnight, the railroad people who also operate the launch have constructed a rest-

house for such passengers as go through. It is just that, nothing more. We were shown to a cubicle approximately ten feet square, in which the rough board partitioning did not reach the high ceiling and which contained a table, a chair, and two canvas cots, each with one sheet and a pillow. A bare electric bulb hung from its wire, too high to reach. The agent explained that it lighted all six cubicles, and that he turned it out himself at ten at night and turned it on again at five in the morning. The light was to be our signal to rise, for the boat left at six. We inquired when it reached Livingston, down on the Gulf, and learned that it got there at about one o'clock in the afternoon. Could we get over to Puerto Barrios where there was a half-decent hotel? Not until next morning, no. Why, then, the six-o'clock start? Our man shrugged and went away. Manifestly, this was just another example of the early start for its own sake.

Well, there we were.

We had eaten lunch early, so we unpacked what was left of Don Roberto's cold chicken and ate it, thinking how far away Cobán seemed now. We saw plainly that we had not sufficiently appreciated the cool Hempstead patio, the staff of well-trained servants, Don Roberto's wholehearted hospitality. One of our cans was tomato-juice, so we drank that and opened a package of American crackers, specially wrapped in waxed paper for the tropics. They were damp and soggy just the same. There were sardines and deviled ham, but something had to be saved for the morning, and for lunch on the boat the next day. This was a rest house,

nothing more; it distinctly didn't run to food, as we had been told.

The meal sat heavily on our stomachs and time weighed us down. As twilight drew on, we sensed rather than saw the mosquito-hordes begin to come up from their daytime retreat under the overhanging banks of the river that bubbled and swirled so close, and we were grateful for the good screening of our room. There was a shower in one corner of the porch and we tried that, though the warmish water didn't cool us much and a smell of mildew and mold came up from the drain like a palpable mist. As it grew darker, the egrets and herons down by the river stopped squawking and giant fireflies began to blink in the trees. By the single light bulb we plotted our next day's voyage on the map, little runnels of sweat flowing down our fingers and staining the green paper, until we had gone over every inch of the lake and river we had not yet seen and there was nothing to do but try to sleep. Tight canvas stretched on two X-supports may be cool but it does not make for comfortable rest. In the cubicle beyond us a German couple (we never saw them) who had evidently come up river on the afternoon launch muttered to each other in guttural syllables, and a thousand bugs danced round the light over our heads. We could hear the river slipping past, and a chorus of frogs asked each other "What-what? What-*what?*" out in the hot darkness. Just before the light went out C. dug up the paper cups again and in tepid mineral water we took another pill. For once, the ancient Spanish toast had a literal and exact significance. *"Salud!"*

she said, which is "Health!" With the quinine bitter in my throat and the croaking mourners outside I wasn't so optimistic about it.

It was more by good luck than anything else that we found the launch that was to take us down river.

As promised, the lights were switched on at five in the morning. We rolled creaking off our canvas cots, discovered that it was still raining and hashed up a kind of breakfast out of a can of sardines, a package of crackers and some tomato-juice. We had been told that the agent at the resthouse would provide coffee, but evidently the task of turning on the lights was all he could manage. Next door the German couple snored healthily; they were not taking the boat, and the up train left later in the morning. When we had eaten and packed up again I looked at my watch. The boat was due to leave in ten minutes. But from where? We tried peering through the screens but could see nothing in the half light. We could hear the river but there was certainly no wharf near us. There was nothing to do but go out and look around.

As it turned out, the launch was tied up to a rattletrap pier a quarter of a mile down river. We made it, staggering down the narrow-gauge track with our bags, just in time. From the depths of a freight-shed the manager appeared, rain dripping from his hat-brim, to collect our money for the night's rest and the fare down the river. "Sirteen dollar," he said. "You have a nize trip!" We said we hoped so.

At Panzós the Río Polochíc is not more than fifty yards

wide, brown and oily and slow-flowing. Our launch was large and comfortable, and there were curtains to keep off the rain. There was no wind, however, and the drizzle was thinning out, so we put them up. We needed what little breeze we got, too, in order to blow away the mosquitoes that had spent the night comfortably beneath the wooden benches, waiting for the ankles that would dangle conveniently for them in the morning. With us as passengers were a tall, sad-looking Spaniard with his daughter of ten, two giggling fourteen-year-old *ladino* girls with incipient moustaches, and an Indian boy of about the same age who never once spoke, moved from his seat or changed his position during the whole trip. All of us slapped at mosquitoes for the first hour, as the launch swung monotonously around curve after curve; but after that, as the sun came up and the breeze freshened, they were gone. The rain stopped, too, and as the sun rose higher the river changed color, losing its muddy look and seeming deeper and darker. Certainly it was wider. The rank green growth still came down to the water's edge, but we could see more sky; we didn't feel as shut in by the jungle as we had in the beginning. The mountains were behind us now, and as the flat lands widened out ahead the birds that live in the swampy lowland marshes began to dart and flicker past us. Sometimes a kingfisher would race the launch for fifty feet or so and then dart off into the tall reeds by the water's edge in boredom; the man-made thing was too easy to beat. Now and again we passed whole colonies of green, crested herons standing near the banks, stabbing their beaks down into

the water and then standing, waiting to stab again. Some of the egrets we had heard last night flashed across our bows, streaks of white where the sun caught them against the shining green forest, and once a monkey chattered in the dense treetops, though we could not see him. We did see toucans, though; their absurd heavy bills looking like burdens held stiffly before them. And several times magnificent red and blue and yellow macaws followed us for a short time before turning off among the trees. The bends in the river were not so sharp now; we skidded round them at full speed instead of slowing for each turn as we had done earlier. But though the river was constantly widening, the tropical feel of it was even stronger. We had never realized how precisely Vachel Lindsay's phrase, in his "Congo" poem, fitted the case; but now we understood what he meant when he wrote of the Congo "cutting through the jungle." That is exactly the effect. The line of demarcation between jungle and water is as sharp as though it had been made with a knife; the river doesn't merely flow through the jungle, it cuts it.

We had reached Lake Izabal before we saw an alligator, but then we were treated to a real show.

Lake Izabal is perhaps twenty-five or thirty miles long; it took us two hours to cross it from end to end. But where the Polochíc debouches into it, there is a wide sand-bar that is evidently a sort of alligator Union League Club. The sad Spaniard's little girl saw it first, and her excited "*Mira! Mira!*—Look! Look!"—made us all jump.

There must have been a dozen of the beasts altogether, maybe more because several didn't like the noise we made and slid down into the water. But most of them stayed where they were and looked us over with the peculiarly self-satisfied, intolerant gaze common to alligators and stout elderly gentlemen in club windows. One or two yawned as we passed; the effect was indescribably insulting. They were not very big, perhaps seven feet long on the average, though it was difficult to tell without any handy basis of comparison. But they owned that sand-bar; no question about it. We might come chuffing past, secure for the moment in our temporary wooden shell. Nevertheless this was the alligators' country, their jungle, their river, their place, and we were the interlopers. One day we or some other human, it didn't matter which, would fall into the water. Then we would be on their level, with none of our sly, manufactured advantages. It had happened before. It would happen again. And when it did, then they would take care of the matter. We shivered a little as we thought of it. Alligators in numbers can do that to you. Even the little girl's eyes grew rounder as she watched the sand-bar recede into the distance. I think everybody felt better when we were well out into the broad lake. It was still jungle country, but the sun was well up and there was a pleasant breeze whipping the water. The heavy green growth was all around us, but it was miles away now, over on the distant shores. We needed the breathing-space before diving into the Río Dulce at the Lake's other end.

The Lake is said to be full of fish, but we were in a busi-

ness boat and no one so much as trailed a line overboard. At its northeastern corner is a small village called Estor —named, as we were told, from the commissary that used to be there, for which the English word was "store," pronounced *"estore"* in Spanish. All our other passengers disembarked there, received on the wharf by what must have been the whole population of the village. It was jungle and no mistake when you came close in to shore. The wind from the lake missed the little cove in which Estor is set, and the heavy, hot air rolled out in a wave toward us as we coasted up to the wooden pier. It took only a few minutes to discharge passengers and baggage, just long enough for the ten-year-old girl to come over and say *"Adiós"* very politely to C., and for her father, who had volunteered no other word up to now, to shake my hand ceremoniously and say good-bye too.

The remaining hour on the Lake will always be associated in our minds with corned beef and asparagus tips. We had cans of both, the last of the provisions we had bought in Guatemala City to carry us through the river trip. Luckily they were cold. The pilot had an ice-chest concealed in the bows, and when we had observed him removing a bottle of beer from its depths earlier in the morning we had popped our cans and mineral water in with his refreshments. With the rest of the passengers gone, the engineer had dug up two deck chairs for us, and we lolled at our ease and ate and drank with a better appetite than we would have thought possible a few hours earlier, finishing just as we slipped out of the Lake proper,

past the ruins of old Fort San Felipe and into the Golfete that leads to the Río Dulce, the Sweet River we had come all this way to see.

The Río Dulce itself is a brief trip; there can't be more than eight or ten miles of it. But it is eight or ten miles of fairyland. Guatemaltecos say it is one of the splendid sights of the world. Here you are still in jungle, of course, but jungle with a difference. The river cuts through the last ridge of hills on the way to the sea, and the rock walls rise straight up on both sides, gray splashed with streaks of brilliant white stone. You are really in a gorge most of the time, but there are none of the rapids or broken water usually associated with such gashes through the mountains; the Dulce runs deep and still. One after another, the magnificent bends sweep past; the effect is just that—the jungle panorama rolling by while your boat stays put. Always the rocky walls hem you in, though you can seldom see them through the blanket of green growth. Occasionally a tree will come straight out at you, growing horizontally from some cleft in the stone. If it were not for the vines that drip gracefully from anything and everything that will support them, the scene would be forbidding; there is almost too much growth and too much rock. But the long trailers looping and swinging down to the water lend grace and motion to the severity of the canyon, and the constant curving of the river keeps you watching for the next vista round the corner. The Dulce is clear, too, and of a pleasant pale brown color quite unlike the sluggish and muddy Polochíc down which we had begun the day's

journey. Even the ever-present jungle does not weigh on you here; it is close, but so is the sea and there is a clear, winelike quality to the air, in spite of the blazing sun.

What else to tell you about it? I do not know. Both of us have tried to recall more of that brief, magical journey, to recapture others of the multitude of enchantments that make the Río Dulce so strange and so lovely. We can remember an old dead tree, a silver-gray giant standing boldly in one of the few breaks in the rocky wall. A little island comes back to us; a division of the river where we slipped past a tiny isolated bit of rock and earth against which an Indian dugout canoe rested, though there was no sign of its owner. Then the water came together again and the islet fled up river behind us, fading and disappearing at last into the green jungle wall. Once a cloud of small yellow butterflies drifted past us; thousands of them jigging in the moist, hot, fragrant air. But that is all. The Río Dulce is something to be seen, an experience to be lived through and not described. You remember it as you remember a dream, vaguely, happily, disconnectedly; it registers on you in terms of emotions, not facts, not even exact pictures. It is much more a state of being than a place; that is the important thing about it. And it has its effect on every traveler who makes the trip. Perhaps the wisest thing the present government of Guatemala has done is to decree that the Sweet River is to be kept inviolate, virgin jungle forever.

What with the rapid curent and our boat's stout engine, we were through the gorges in half an hour. There ahead

of us, down on the shore of the Gulf of Honduras that opens into the Caribbean, was Livingston. Now our troubles were going to begin again.

We knew, because we had investigated, that Livingston had no hotel worthy of the name. We knew also that the regular boat across the mouth of the Gulf to Puerto Barrios did not leave until next morning. Our launch would be tied up alongside Livingston's wharf by half-past two at the latest, and there we'd be with the rest of the afternoon and the night to spend in one of the least attractive places in Guatemala. Why couldn't we do something about it?

We asked our pilot. Wasn't there some kind of boat we could hire to take us over to Barrios? He said, well, yes, there was; a launch that rejoiced in the stirring name of the *Furor*. But, he added, we didn't want that. Why didn't we? Well, in the morning one could get over to Barrios for eighty-five cents on the regular company boat. To be sure, we replied; we knew that. But what was wrong with the *Furor*? Oh, nothing was wrong with it. It was a fine boat, a very fine boat indeed. The thing was the expense, the dreadful price its owner would charge to take us. "How much?" we both said at once. Our pilot hemmed and hawed; we could see he did not like to shock us. But finally he came out with it. It was his belief that the owner of the *Furor,* an Englishman, would demand eight dollars to take a private party over to Barrios. That was a great deal of money, no?

We agreed that it was, and as we slid up to the pier we were debating the likelihood of our being able to talk the

Englishman down to a lower rate. At least we would be able to bargain with him in a language whose ins and outs we knew. But we never saw that Englishman. We didn't have to. On the pier were Mr and Mrs Klain, Livingston representatives of the United Fruit Company. They had heard we were coming, and had walked down to meet us. And with them was a gray-haired, naval-looking gentleman in immaculate whites, who introduced himself. "I'm Captain Grant, of the *Musa,*" he said, "and I've come over from Barrios to get you!" I am afraid we did not seem properly grateful to Mr and Mrs Klain, who told us that if Captain Grant hadn't come they were going to put us up for the night at their own home. We were grateful, naturally. But at the moment we could think only of our perfect, our magnificent, our dazzling good luck. Barrios and a bath! Barrios and mail from home! Barrios and dinner aboard the *Musa* with Captain Grant! We waved good-bye to the Klains and Livingston, still in a daze.

As a matter of actual fact, Puerto Barrios itself is no treat.

It isn't really a town at all; it is a place from which the United Fruit Company ships bananas—a wharf at which ships may tie up, and a railroad shed that is there because this is the end (or the beginning) of the railroad that runs through Guatemala City from the Pacific to the Caribbean. There are a few dozen graceful leaning cocoa-palms, some scattered houses of a nondescript sort, a third-rate hotel and the big, yellow rambling resthouse of the United Fruit

Company. On the way over, Captain Grant had told us we would not need to stay at the hotel; quarters had been arranged for us at the resthouse and we were to move right in. In fact, our bags that we had sent down from Guatemala City were there now, waiting for us.

We didn't know just how lucky we were until we arrived. In our minds a resthouse was something like the screened hutch in Panzós where we had stretched horizontally (it would be going too far to say we had slept) while we waited for our early morning launch. But this was nothing like that. After our last two days it looked like the ultimate in luxury—comfortable beds, water both filtered and boiled and specially cooled, our own shower. The room had even its private balcony with wicker chairs invitingly distributed on it. The Company manager for the port, Mr Austin, had our mail for us, including a note from one of the Company's farm-managers who had heard we were anxious to see how bananas were produced and who invited us, sight unseen, to visit him and his wife for as long as we liked to poke through the banana country. He was only a few miles from Quiriguá, which we doubtless wanted to see, and he would meet us there the next day when the train came through. Still a trifle giddy from the relief of having everything taken care of for us, we dressed for dinner on the ship. Mr Austin, who thought of everything, even had a black Carib boy with a flashlight to take us down the dark wharf and put us aboard.

That dinner will always stay with us as the high spot of our arrival on the Caribbean coast. Until you have subsisted

for two days on the kind of canned rations we had to take down the river with us, you cannot know the true delight of plain ordinary roast beef, rare. Unless you have spent two months in a country where you must watch every drop of water you drink, you cannot realize the extraordinary pleasure of draining a glass of safe water—from New York's Croton Reservoir, Captain Grant told us—and asking for more. The lettuce was grown in New Jersey; no strange amoeba lurked in its crisp folds. There was celery we could crunch without a qualm; the ice cream was made from American milk. Perhaps I seem to stress the simple pleasures of the palate. But until you have had the same experience you cannot know how it is.

I chatted with Captain Grant about his books—he writes sea-stories and good ones, too—and C. was deep in conversation with a man who must be one of the last of the old breed of soldiers of fortune; the kind O. Henry used to write about. He was eating aboard ship while he could, since next day he and his partner were leaving for an expedition into the jungles of Guatemala and Honduras. They were going to be cut off from civilization for a year. He said that neither of them minded much; they were used to that kind of thing. We tried to find out more about the expedition, but your proper soldier of fortune does not make a stranger free of his plans and he changed the subject to his past. We were enchanted to learn that once he had been in the captive-balloon trade, back in the days before the war. For years he had taken his balloon round from one country fair to another, hoisting courageous fairgoers six hundred

feet into the air for the sum of one dollar a head, and hauling them down again after they had had a chance to spot Neighbor Brown's farm and the schoolhouse from above. I was trying to listen to him and to Captain Grant at the same time, so I am not sure whether he had carried a total of forty-three thousand passengers before the captive-balloon business went to pot with the coming of the airplane, or whether the Captain had written forty-three thousand stories. But it doesn't make a great deal of difference now and it didn't then. There were electric fans whirring over the table, the coffee was excellent (perhaps not quite as good, to the connoisseur's taste, as the fine Guatemalan grades we had been drinking, but it was our own kind of coffee), and the rare roast beef sat warmly and comfortably on the stomach. Maybe there would be mosquitoes tomorrow, up in the banana back-country where we were going, but tonight everything was all right. Even the sudden tropical shower that caught us as we walked back to our room was warm and didn't seem to wet us very much. It merely freshened the air, outdoors and in. Somewhere a Carib girl laughed in the high, throaty, chuckling Negro fashion, and we could hear the soughing of the water on the beach. The capital, the Highlands, Cobán, Panzós and the river trip all seemed very far away, like something we had seen in another life. This was another, a new Guatemala.

XIII

THE morning train for Quiriguá got off surprisingly close to schedule.

It was not a tourist day; the *Musa's* passengers had gone on up to Guatemala City and would not be back until evening. There was a young American who had something to do with the technical end of the government's radio station—we never learned just what—and there were ourselves in the first-class coach; that was all. But the second-class car—that was something else.

When we arrived, deposited our bags and stepped down again to the platform to walk about until departure time, the second-class car had only three or four occupants; Indians who sat and stolidly regarded the shifting, colorful kaleidoscope of the platform with expressionless eyes. They were no part of the black, cackling, gabbling throng, and knew it. As for the rest of them, laughing and screaming,

poking each other in the ribs and throwing back their heads to laugh again, I suppose for lack of a better word they must be called Caribs—though the true Carib stock has become so mixed here that the word hardly fits. There were a few Jamaica negroes among them; we could hear the English syllables, curiously clear and precise, coming out of that incomprehensible clatter of speech now and then. But most of them were just black coast-people, a bit of Indian perhaps, a drop or so of Spanish blood maybe, a great deal of Negro, all combined to make as fantastic a race-mixture as you will find anywhere on earth. One tall black woman—she must have been six feet and close to two hundred pounds—caught our eye; indeed we could not have missed her. She had no shoes. Her thin blue cotton dress showed very plainly that her only undergarment was a fine large pair of poison-pink bloomers. But she wore a hat that must have been the envy of every other black woman in Barrios; a giant, bright red cartwheel of straw that looked as though it could only have been designed for some stately showgirl in a Follies finale. It not only shaded her, but spread its scarlet tent over a dozen or so lesser girls and women who had crowded around her to have a last word before she left for the valley of the Motagua where the bananas grow. Two little black boys, their eyeballs rolling and their teeth gleaming whitely, snatched a fish apiece from the basket she was carrying, but she only laughed, a high "Hyeh-hyeh!," and caught one of them a rousing slap on the back of his head as he ducked through the crowd. There were plenty more fish in her basket for her friends up

in the hot flat lands. She must have been a favorite among the Barrios blacks, for even after she had boarded the car and leaned, a bosomy mountain, from the window, still clutching that mad hat, her little group crowded round for a last excited spatter of talk before the train left.

There was a brief delay when the engineer suddenly remembered that he had a detachment of soldiers to carry somewhere up the line and that he needed still another car to put them in. The little Indian men stood at ease, leaning on their rifles, silent and scornful of the hysterical black people, while the engine puffed down the yard, picked up a car for them and brought it back. Then they filed aboard, disappearing, one after another like toy soldiers in a shooting gallery, into the depths of the coach. The second-class windows sprouted waving arms and shining teeth, and with a final chorus of shrieking laughter we were away. Now we would learn about bananas.

The railroad follows the Río Motagua, a wide, brown, sluggish stream whose valley spreads out into one of the ideal banana-growing spots of the whole coast. There is very little to enliven the two-hour trip to Quiriguá. We could not talk to the American radio-engineer; the train made so much noise we would have had to shout every word. Anyway, he preferred to sit and smoke and think about his kilocycles. Once we thought we saw an alligator on the bank of the river, but when we pointed it out to the conductor he shook his head and said it was only a log of wood. Once, at a tiny station on the line, a squad of

soldiers lounging at the door jumped to attention and raggedly presented arms as we went by; there just might have been a general or something aboard and they were taking no chances. But for the most part there was little to see; the brown river, the endless acres of bananas, the widely spaced groups of workers' shacks, all alike, standardized by the Fruit Company's expert efficiency engineers. Then we were at Quiriguá, and our host, Mr Buckley, was waiting for us. No, he didn't live in Quiriguá, but a few miles out, on one of the branch railway lines with which the Company has criss-crossed their plantations. He had a gasoline-car waiting for us and all we had to do was hop aboard and be off. Lunch was waiting and his wife would be glad to see us. It sounded simple.

It might have been simple, too, if the unexpected hadn't happened. Down in this district, no one can conduct his affairs without taking his neighbor into consideration. That is acknowledged custom in any isolated or primitive country, and here it must be especially observed. There are no roads, just mule-tracks. People get from place to place only by special train, by clambering aboard a string of banana-cars if they happen to be going the right way, or by one of the little gasoline rail-hoppers we were using. And if someone turns up and asks for a ride, you make room. Maybe tomorrow you'll need someone to do the same for you.

That was what happened to us. The diminutive seat of the car had space for the boy who was running it, our host and one of us. But here were three *ladino* girls and a man

going the same way and wouldn't we give them a lift? There was, of course, nothing else to do.

The three girls, buxom and tittering, managed to squeeze into the seat with C. Our chauffeur crouched alongside, clinging in some mysterious limpet-like fashion to the edge of the car. Our host and I sat on the front, our legs hanging over, and the girl's escort balanced himself on the back. Bags were tucked into odd corners, the driver hopped off long enough to give us a push, the engine coughed and started and we were on our way. Perhaps you have ridden in one of these demoniac contrivances. Maybe thousands of people ride them every day and find them a perfectly ordinary means of transportation. Very likely they wouldn't be so bad carrying only a normal load; the headlong speed might not seem so fearsome if you were sitting in the seat, properly braced. But when you are perched on the front edge of nothing, with the rails rushing toward you and the ties shuttling past eighteen inches beneath your heels, then this kind of travel has its unhappy aspects. Suppose your car jumped the rails, for instance? Suppose one of the tiny toy switches should be thrown the wrong way? Suppose—but what was the use? There was an iron bar within reach and I hung on to that with one hand and held my hat with the other. A look over my shoulder had shown me that since the driver couldn't reach the throttle from where he clung, he had delegated the job to the youngest and most spirited of the girls who was having a grand time pulling the string back as far as it would go.

I have been told that we did not make that trip at more

than, say, forty miles an hour. The car, they said, wouldn't go any faster than that. But it seemed to me a good deal nearer seventy. Banana farms flowed past us on either side like green rivers. Now and then we would shoot through a belt of strangely odorous air—discarded stems of bananas fermenting where they lay, going back to the soil to produce more bananas. Once we flickered by a string of empties on a siding; we heard the beginning of the "*Hyeeee!*" with which the loading-crew greeted us, but we were out of earshot before they had even finished their cheer. Manifestly we got where we were going. But it was half an hour before we could rid ourselves of the feeling that our host's porch-swing was hurtling to destruction under us.

The business of supplying bananas to the United States is a curiously simple affair from one standpoint and a very complicated one from another.

As far as production goes, barring plant diseases from which the banana has been obligingly free here until recent years, the thing practically takes care of itself. You clear so many acres, plant so many "heads" and nature kindly does the rest. The tree (which really isn't a tree at all, but a compact growth of tightly curled leaves) shoots up and produces its more or less perfect stem of bananas. By the time it has done that, there are several new shoots coming up from the root, from which you select the best, trimming the others away. Then, when your stem of bananas is ripe enough, you cut it off, cut down the tree and leave the

favored new shoot to carry on. In two or three months the one that has been cut down goes back into the soil and the shoot is a tree, bearing its own new stem of bananas. All you do is to allow the process to continue, which it generously does until the ground is worn out. By that time you have cleared new acreage and have your new farms under way. And the soil that will no longer grow fine bananas is still good for other crops.

Nature herself, then, produces the banana under a minimum of guidance, always excepting the possible occurrence of disease. But getting the banana to market at precisely the moment when it is ready is another matter. That calls for organization and the United Fruit Company has it all figured out to a hair.

Suppose you are one of the young Americans working as manager of a Company farm.

You are sitting on the porch of a house The Company has built for you, exactly like a thousand other houses all up and down the Banana Coast of Central and South America. You are smoking an after-dinner cigarette from the Company commissary, and perhaps discussing with your wife the shows you hope to see in New York when The Company gives you your vacation next month. Your telephone rings. It is the superintendent of the district in which your farm lies. Tomorrow a ship will dock at Puerto Barrios. The Company radio station has received a message that fifteen thousand stems of bananas are needed to complete the cargo that the ship began to take on, down on the coast of Honduras. Your quota is so many stems. You say

"Right!" and hang up. Several dozen or maybe several hundred other farm-managers are doing the same thing at the same moment.

You and your neighbors then begin the same routine. You notify your foreman that so many men will start cutting at such-and-such places early tomorrow morning. You know where they must work and about how many stems are ready to be cut, because that is your job. You notify your mule-boy to have the mule ready for you at 5:30 in the morning. Then you go to bed.

Meanwhile orders have gone out to have so many freight-cars spotted at designated points along the main line at specified hours during the morning. Your farm and the others are crossed by lines of rails on which run small hand-cars. As your men cut, others are waiting with mules which carry four stems at a time down to your spur track for loading. Each stem is checked for quality as it is loaded; ones that are not up to standard are left behind on the ground. The spur track runs down to the main line, where all stems are checked again before being put aboard the freight-cars. Again discards are left to rot. By noon, probably, you have finished your part of the job. So have your neighbors. The fruit is on its way to the port.

Down at the ship there is a last check-up; no banana is shipped unless it comes up to the set standard. All afternoon the loading goes on, and all night a steady stream of black stevedores moves from car to conveyor-belt, each bent under a bright green-stem of fruit. Down in the hold another crew is stowing the stems in carefully refrigerated and

aired compartments. Bananas, oddly, need to breathe. Even if you regulate the temperature with the utmost care, the banana will go to pieces unless it has fresh air. By midnight, maybe, or three in the morning, the cargo is loaded. Then the ship sails—right away. Passengers had better be aboard. The business of the United Fruit Company is bananas; the fruit comes first.

That, roughly, is how the United States gets its bananas from Guatemala and from the other banana countries. It is a business requiring exact timing, precise coordination, staff work of a very complicated order. But it is an interesting business, as many a lively and adventurous young American has found out. And the United Fruit Company has a way of preferring its officers to come from the ranks. The best heads are made from the best overseers, or so they believe. The youngster just beginning has, so to say, a vice-president's fountain-pen in his mule's saddle-bag.

As for the troubles of the banana-grower, those are chiefly storms, floods and the Panama disease which has recently put in an appearance in Guatemala as an added worry. Too, the soil wears out in spite of new methods of growing and fertilization. The Company has just acquired new lands on the Pacific Coast of Guatemala and will plant something like a quarter of a million acres of bananas there in the next few years. But they will go out from the east coast just the same, shipped across the mountains and down to Barrios. Loading is too difficult on the west coast, and the big markets are Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and New Orleans. And tolls through the Panama Canal

would cut too heavily into the profits. The old lands, on which the Company has long leases, will have to be turned to other uses. Curiously enough, one of the schemes now being tried out is the growing of *cacao*. It will be an odd thing if the urgencies of commerce bring back to Guatemala the chocolate that old Thomas Gage saw everywhere in this country in the seventeenth century, but which you hardly encounter anywhere now.

The ruins of Quiriguá have been known for about a hundred years but only in the last two decades have they been made available to the casual tourist. To the Carnegie Institute and its indefatigable workers, Edgar L. Hewett and Sylvanus G. Morley goes the credit for uncovering, listing and interpreting (as far as this is possible yet) the carvings and inscriptions upon the huge monoliths that stand here in the jungle. The Fruit Company itself has set aside the seventy-five acres surrounding these ruins as an archaeological open-air museum and keeps the ground cleared. Some years ago the great stelae stood just as they were found, but now the Carnegie people have set the tumbled ones in place, stuck explanatory signs in the ground at each, and surrounded practically all of them with barbed-wire fences, through which it is easy to see well enough but impossible to get good photographs.

Quiriguá, therefore, in the midst of a jungle preserve as it is, has still the air of an arranged museum. That may have been why we were unable to feel about it as one is supposed to.

Perhaps you have noticed that it has become the fashion to sentimentalize about early Mayan ruins, here at Quiriguá or elsewhere. You are expected to gaze upon these relics of a vanished day with mingled feelings of wonder and awe, to reflect on the melancholy aspects of the conquest of the Maya and his degeneration into the present-day Central American Indian. In fact, it doesn't do any harm if you even grow a trifle mystical about the business. Most of the latter-day Central American travel-writers have done this. There have been pages, even whole chapters, written about the strange and mysterious look in the eyes of these sculptured figures; some writers even go so far as to declare that it was exactly the same look that they observed in the eye of the present-day Indian in the mountains, proceeding to associate the Quiché of today with his Mayan ancestor in a sort of spiritual twinship which is hardly warranted. It has become the smart thing to do, the automatic reaction, very much like saying "A clever little people!" every time the Japanese are mentioned.

The curious thing about this is that it seems to be twentieth-century habit of mind. Stephens, when he wrote his classic book about Central America a hundred years ago, didn't do it. He was interested, of course; any intelligent observer would be. But he didn't go ga-ga about it all. He saw at once the archaeological importance of the ruins over in Honduras at Copán, for instance, from which center Quiriguá was colonized. But his mind was of a more practical type, as perhaps most nineteenth-century minds were. What he wanted to do was to buy the site. And there is

little doubt that he'd have made an offer on the Quiriguá property, too, if he had thought that in the upset state of Guatemalan politics there was any chance of doing anything about it. Even the Maudslays, writing in the 1890's, kept their heads on the subject of the ruins. They speculated and wondered about the origin and history of these great monoliths. They realized that these lonely stones in the wilderness represented an extraordinary civilization, and they saw the value to the archaeologist and the historian if the secrets of that civilization could be discovered. But they didn't go moony. They sat down and made diagrams and drawings. It has been left to the supposedly hard-boiled writer of the 1920's to throw fits of mystical hysterics about the Secret of the Stones. Unless you cast your eyes toward heaven and rhapsodize about the Maya and his possible attainment of the Ultimate Truth—which, if he did attain it, couldn't apparently have done him much good—then you are not thought to have done the right thing about the ruins. You are a Philistine, and not at all a Sensitive Person.

I am sorry, but the Quiriguá monoliths did not do any of these things to us. Certainly the unknown people who worked out the Maya system of dates must have been remarkably shrewd and brainy for their time. They were preoccupied with the calendar as a matter of course, because they were an agricultural people and their whole lives depended upon their understanding and keeping track of the seasons. Among them there must have been men—generations of them, brought up in the priesthood—who, by dint of constant application and industry and sheer

brains, developed their knowledge of time and their system of handling the time-concept to a very high state indeed. But then what? It does not seem to me that this implies any more than its face value. A clever little people; so much is plain. But possessors of Ultimate Truth? Well, hardly. We are in our own generation a clever little people, what with our skyscrapers and our airplanes, our talking wires and our mighty engines of destruction. But have we The Truth? The loudest denials will come from the very sentimentalists who would suggest so mystically that the Maya had.

We walked through the band of jungle which has been left standing to enclose the ruins. Inside the ring of trees and underbrush the massive gray stelae stood, the mossy zoomorphs squatted, each in its little plot surrounded by the wire that was necessary to defeat the chipping-hammer tourist and the initial-scratcher. We read the placards which give the date of each piece as far as the archaeologist can arrive at it, and tell something of the reason for its existence. Here was the Great Turtle, though no one can explain why the archaeologists insist on calling it that, magnificently carved and inscribed with glyphs, probably, the crowning achievement of the people who made it. Here was the twelve-foot monolith called The Queen—also without rhyme or reason, since there is no reason to believe that it represents a queen or that the Maya had queens at all. Here was the lesser monument named The Alligator's Head, of which Dr Hewett writes that it seems much more like the head of a tiger, which it does. Here, at either end of the enclosure, were the mounds which may have supported

temples. Did they? It is still a matter for conjecture. Your answer depends, anyhow, a good deal upon how you define a temple. Maybe the archaeologist of ten centuries hence will refer to the Grand Central Station and the Congressional Library as "temples." Maybe, indeed, they are.

And as we walked we tried—we honestly tried—to whip up some semblance of a shiver. Here we were, in the very middle of what may have been a center of worship and of bloody sacrifice a thousand years ago. All around us were the relics of the ancient people who inhabited these alluvial plains, who worked these intricate patterns in the rock, who stood these mighty stones upright to be their monuments forever. Beneath our feet, even, as excavations had shown, were other strata of earlier cultures still. We were walking the graveyards of yesterday and we should have felt something. After all, we had sensed the breath of the past in other places—in, for instance, the great plaza of the Pyramids of Teotihuacán in Mexico, and up in these Guatemalan Highlands when we had heard the humming and thudding of the Mayan drum. But here, no. There was no use trying. This was a museum. The barbed wire, the carefully placed signs, the well-pruned jungle—all these were too much; they muffled the old voices beyond hearing. At least we hoped that was it. We should not like to be thought merely Insensitive Persons.

Back at Quiriguá's little railroad station we shook hands with our host, with Mr Clark, the Fruit Company agent for the district, and with Doctor McPhail whose fine Company

Hospital stands up on the hill, a health center for this banana empire, and swung on to the train steps just as the piled-up clouds burst in a warm, silvery flood.

All down the Motagua Valley the sun and rain alternated. Now we would be sliding through the long, bright evening rays; now we were drenched in water that turned the world gray excepting far off to the south and east where the low light played on the purple hills over toward Honduras. Halfway down to the port the sun set and the rain made up its mind to stay; we roared onward in the dark, in a fine smother of water and engine-smoke that hid even the reflection of our lights on the glossy leaves of the banana-palms along the track. It was not at all like riding in the rain at home, snug in a parlor car with two thicknesses of glass between the passenger and the weather, insulated in efficiency and green plush. Here we were a part of the storm, swept on by it; we felt the cool wet gusts from the open door of the toy observation platform; the water streamed and leapt from the brass grillwork, red on one side and green on the other as it caught the light from the rear lamps; the rails gleamed behind us as we fled away from them; little pools between the ties winked for a moment and went out as we rushed over them, past them, beyond them, down to the sea.

The station lights looked warm and comforting when we pulled up out of the dark at last. There was Mr Austin, who knew the answers to everything. "Yes, your bags are on the ship," he said. "Customs? Oh, well, that part of it's all right. Courtesy of the port, you understand!" We didn't;

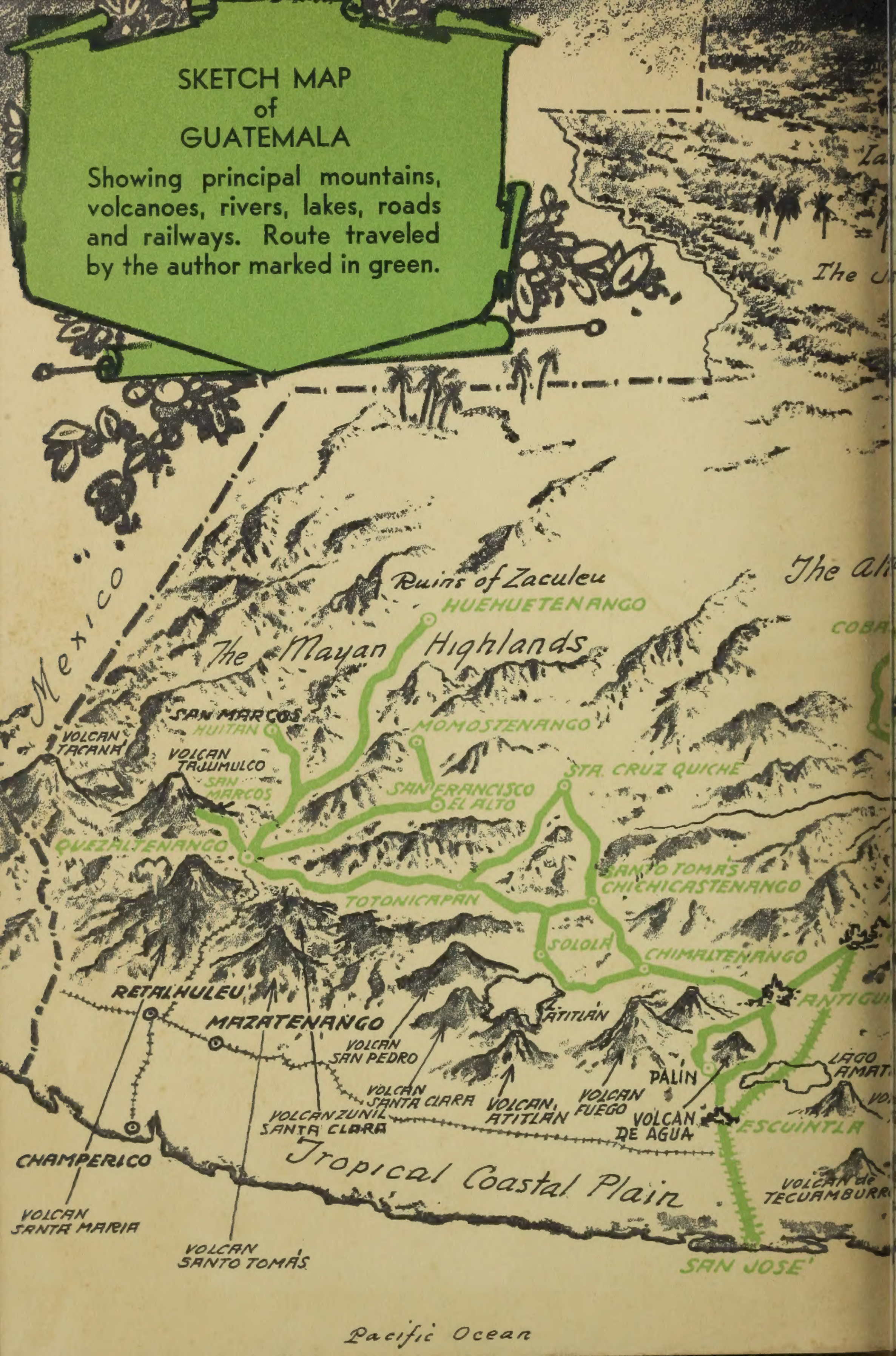
after all we were hardly visiting diplomats. But we said no more. The luxury of having everything taken care of for us was welcome enough. Besides, it was a little like walking in a dream. The rain pounded on the iron roof of the dark wharf-shed; there were unfamiliar noises, shoutings all around us and the sweet-mash smell of overripe bananas from the long strings of cars whose burden was pouring steadily into the *Iriona's* hold. Tall, grotesque shadows danced on the dim walls and against the ship's white side as we thanked Mr Austin for all his kindness and said good-bye.

In our stateroom after dinner the dreamlike feeling persisted. Could we really be leaving Guatemala? Was it possible that we would be turning up coat-collars against snow and bleak, biting winds in a mere four days? Contrarily, we yearned toward the land, toward the warm, soft wind that had followed after the rain. We thought of the Río Dulce, of Cobán and the tall friendly magnolia in the Hempstead patio and cordial Don Roberto and the little Indian maid who had pattered out to us with tea and limes every afternoon. We recalled Chichicastenango and the lovely white façade of the church of Santo Tomás, and the harsh notes of the *chirimilla* and the sound of the drums in the hills. There was Quezaltenango, too, and the scenic-railway ride through the mountains and the clouds with Federico, and San Martín Chile Verde that we had never seen; there was the tang of the pines up in San Francisco El Alto and the clear cold wind that blew across its heights. Antigua came back to us, and we thought of old Hermano

Pedro ringing his sweet silver bell, of the glimmering transparencies in the procession we had watched in the quiet, dark street, of the *marimba* humming and the little brown boy's bare feet whispering on the cool, smooth tiles as he danced that night for the tourists. "Do you remember?" said C., and we remembered—the sharp wind on blue Atitlán and the black volcanoes as the sun went down behind them, the pungent smoke of Indian fires drifting across the valleys, the fantastic maskers on Christmas Day in Huitán, the wine-clear air of Guatemala City and the many generous friends whose kindness had helped two strangers to see and to know and to feel at home in a new place. Below us as we rested our elbows and looked out, the fruit flowed into the ship, a brilliant green stream under the diamond-hard white lights. Even lying back in our berths we could see it reflected in the thick glass of the open port, an endless, unbroken river, fed from the steaming lowlands back behind Barrios, out there in the warm, drowsy dark.

Our electric fan buzzed gently and some time in the night the ship went with the tide.

THE END


SKETCH MAP
of
GUATEMALA
Showing principal mountains, volcanoes, rivers, lakes, roads and railways. Route traveled by the author marked in green.
Mexico
Ruins of Zaculeu
HUEHUETENANGO
The Mayan Highlands
SAN MARCOS
HUITAN
MOMOSTENANGO
VOLCAN TACANA
VOLCAN TAJUMULCO
SAN MARCOS
SAN FRANCISCO EL ALTO
STA. CRUZ QUICHE
QUEZALTENANGO
TOTONICAPAN
SANTO TOMAS CHICHICASTENANGO
SOLOLA
CHIMALTENANGO
RETALHULEU
MAZATENANGO
ATITLAN
VOLCAN SAN PEDRO
VOLCAN SANTA CLARA
VOLCAN ZUNIL SANTA CLARA
VOLCAN, ATITLAN
VOLCAN FUEGO
PALIN
VOLCAN DE AGUA
ESCUINTLA
Tropical Coastal Plain
CHAMPERICO
VOLCAN SANTA MARIA
VOLCAN SANTO TOMAS
SAN JOSE
Pacific Ocean

Andres
Flores
of El Petén
British
Honduras
Caribbean Sea
LIVINGSTON
RIO DULCE
PUERTO BARRIOS
Lago
de Izabal
Paz.
RIO POLOCHIC
TACTIC
PANCAJCHE'
PANZÓS
RIO MOTAGUA
QUIRIGUA'
The Banana Country
ZACAPA
PROGRESO
CHIQUIMULA
Honduras
EMALA CITY
ESQUIPULAS
LAGUNA DE GUIJA
N
W
E
S
VOLCAN de CHINGO
El Salvador